The Second Life of Saint Francis

by Brother Thomas of Celano

Here Begins the Preface

IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. AMEN. TO THE MINISTER-GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

1. It was the pleasure of the entire holy assembly of the late Chapter-General, and of you, most reverend father (not without a dispensation of the Divine Counsel) to enjoin on our insignificance, for the comfort of those living, and as a memorial for those to come, to write of the deeds and also of the words of our glorious father Francis, for that through long experience of them they were better known to us than to the rest by reason of our constant association with him and the mutual intimacy between us. Therefore are we forward to obey with humble devotion holy injunctions which it is by no means lawful to pass by: but the small account we are disposed to make of our own strength gives us just cause to fear, lest so worthy a matter, through not being treated of as it requires, may derive from us that which may be displeasing to the rest. For we dread that things worthy of the savour of all sweetness may be rendered insipid through the unworthiness of the dispensers of them, and that accordingly our attempt may be set down to presumption rather than to obedience. For if the examination of the result of this great labour [of ours] only pertained to your good will, blessed father, and there were no question of its coming to the public ear, we should most thankfully derive instruction from your correction, or joy from your approval. For amid such a variety of words and deeds who could so weigh everything in the scale of an exact balance that all the hearers should be unanimous as to every point? But inasmuch as we are seeking with simple mind the advantage of each and all, we entreat our readers to put a kind interpretation on our work and to bear with the simplicity of the narrators or guide it in such sort that the reverence of him who is the subject of our discourse may be saved harmless. The flight of his subtle words, and the amazing story of his deeds are beyond the reach of our recollection, blunted like that of untaught men by length of time; for the agility of a practised memory were scarce able to comprehend these things even when present before it. Let therefore the repeated command of one who has many times enjoined us excuse before all men the faults of our

unskilfulness.

2. This work contains first of all certain wonderful events in the conversion of Saint Francis which were not put into the legends composed some time ago concerning him, because they had not come to the author's notice. Next we intend to express, and with watchful zeal to declare, what was that good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of the most holy father both as to himself and as to his brethren in every practice of heavenly discipline, and in the zeal for supreme perfection which he ever had as regards God in his sacred affections, and as regards men in the examples he gave them. Some miracles are inserted, as occasion offers. We describe in a plain and unpretending way what presents itself to us, desiring to accommodate ourselves to those of slower wit, but also, if we may, to give pleasure to the learned. We beg you therefore, kindest father, to be pleased to hallow with your blessing the present of this work, small though not to be despised, and sought out by us with no little toil; correcting what is wrong, and removing what is superfluous, so that what is approved by your learned judgment as well said, may, together with your name, truly Crescentius, (the writer here plays on the derivation of the name Crescentius from *crescere*, to increase) everywhere increase and be multiplied in Christ. Amen.

Here Ends the Preface

Here Begins the "Memorial in Longing of Soul" of the Deeds and Words of Our Most Holy Father Francis

Of His Conversion

Chapter 1

How he was first called John and afterwards Francis. How his mother prophesied of him, and how he himself also foretold what would come to pass concerning himself; and of his patience in imprisonment

3. Francis, the servant and friend of the Most High (to whom Divine Providence gave this name in order that a singular and unusual designation might make the rumour of his ministry the more quickly known to all the world) was called by his mother John when, being born again by water and the Holy Ghost, he a child of wrath became a child of grace. The conduct of this woman (a friend of all goodness) was characterised by a certain token of virtue, for she was in some sort privileged to resemble the holy Elizabeth, both as regards the giving of a name to her son, and as regards the prophetic spirit. For while her neighbours were wondering at Francis' noble bearing and courteous ways she would say (as though prompted by a Divine oracle); "How think you that this son of mine will turn out? Be assured that he will become a son of God by his merits." Such indeed was the opinion of some who were very much pleased with Francis when a stripling because of his zeal for good. He always avoided every word which might give pain to any one, and the youth's manners were so refined that he seemed to all as if born of other parents than those from whom he was said to have sprung. Now his name of John has reference to the work of the ministry which he took up, while that of Francis to the spread of his fame, which after his full conversion to God soon reached every place. Accordingly he thought that among the feasts of all other saints that of John the Baptist was pre-eminent, the dignity of whose name had imprinted on him a trace of mystic virtue. Among those born of woman none has arisen greater than John: among the founders of Religions none has arisen more perfect than Francis. An observation surely worthy to be heralded!

4. John prophesied shut up within the secret place of his mother's womb; Francis confined in a worldly prison foretold the future while still ignorant of the Divine counsel. For once when there was

a bloody battle between the citizens of Perugia and those of Assisi, Francis with several others was taken, and being put in chains with the rest endured the horrors of imprisonment. His fellow-captives, absorbed in sadness, bewailed their wretched plight: Francis, exulting in the Lord, laughed at his chains and despised them. His doleful companions rebuked him for making merry in his chains, and deemed him mad and demented. Francis answered prophetically: "Wherein think you that I exult? Another thought is with me: I shall yet be worshipped as a Saint all the world over." (And so indeed it is: all he said has been fulfilled.) Among his fellow-prisoners was a knight, a very proud and unbearable man: but, while all the rest determined to shun him, Francis' patience did not fail. He endured the unendurable knight and induced the others to make it up with him. Capable of every grace the chosen vessel now pours forth unctions of virtue everywhere! (Or, "the chosen vessel of the virtues now pours forth unctions everywhere".)

Chapter 2

Of a poor knight whom he clothed; and of the vision of his call which he saw while in the world

5. Having been loosed from his chains after a while, he became more kindly compassionate toward the poor. He now resolved never to turn his face from any poor man who in his petition should plead "the love of God". Once he met a knight who was poor and almost naked, and being admonished by pity gave him freely for Christ's sake the costly attire he was wearing. How did his behaviour differ from that of the most holy Martin except that while they were one in their purpose and in their act they were unlike in their manner of doing it? Francis gave his clothes before the rest of his possessions, Martin first gave up all the rest and his clothes last: each lived poorly and scantily in the world; each entered heaven rich. The one a knight but a poor man cut his garment in two to clothe a poor man, the other a rich man but not a knight clothed a poor knight with an entire garment. Each, having fulfilled Christ's command, was found worthy to be visited by Christ in a vision, the one being praised for his perfection, the other most graciously invited to fulfil what was lacking. (i.e., to be baptized)

6. Presently Francis was shown in a vision a beautiful palace

wherein he saw various warlike accoutrements and a lovely bride. In the dream Francis was called by name and allured by the promise of all this. He endeavoured, therefore, to go to Apulia to win knighthood; and after making the needful preparations on a lavish scale he hastened toward the attainment of the knightly dignity. A carnal spirit was suggesting to him a carnal interpretation of the vision he had seen, whereas a far more glorious one lay hid in the treasures of God's wisdom. Accordingly one night when he was sleeping he was addressed a second time in a vision and strictly questioned as to whither he intended to go. And when he had told his purpose to his questioner, saying that he was going to war in Apulia, the same questioner earnestly asked him who could do better for him, the servant or the lord? "The lord," said Francis. "Why, then," answered the other, "art thou seeking the servant instead of the lord?" Then Francis said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said to him, "Go back to the place of thy birth, for through Me thy vision shall have spiritual fulfilment". He went back without delay (having already become a pattern of obedience) and, resigning his own will, became Paul instead of Saul. Saul was thrown to the earth, and heavy stripes produced words of sweetness; but Francis turned his carnal weapons into spiritual, and instead of martial glory received a Divine government.

And so to the many who were amazed at his unwonted gladness he said that he was going to be a great prince.

Chapter 3

How a band of youths made him their master of the revels, so that he might feed them: and of the change that came over him

7. He began to be changed into a perfect man and to become other than he had been. So on his return home the children of Babylon followed him and dragged him, now that he was tending elsewhither, to other pursuits even against his will; for a band of young fellows of Assisi, whose leader he had formerly been in their vanity, still continued to invite him to share their feasts, which always ministered to wantonness and buffoonery. They made him their chief, for, having often experienced his liberality, they knew without doubt that he would pay the expenses of them all. They

yielded him obedience that they might fill their bellies, and endured subjection that they might be able to glut themselves. He did not refuse the proffered honour, that he might not be taxed with stinginess, and amid his holy meditations was mindful of good-fellowship. He prepared a sumptuous banquet and doubled the dainties, and his guests, filled with them even to vomiting, polluted the streets of the town with their drunken songs. Francis followed them carrying a staff in his hands as master of the revels; but by degrees he withdrew from them in body, being already in mind become deaf to such things, as he sang in his heart to the Lord. Then (as he himself related) he was filled with such Divine sweetness, that he became speechless and was quite unable to move from the spot. Then a kind of spiritual affection pervaded him, carrying him away to things invisible, by virtue whereof he judged all earthly things [not only] of no moment but entirely worthless. Amazing indeed is the condescension of Christ Who gives to those that do the least things the greatest gifts, and in the overflowing of waters preserves and advances those that are His! For Christ fed the crowds with bread and fish, nor did He repel sinners from His feast. When they sought to make Him their king He fled and went up into a mountain to pray.

It was God's mysteries that Francis was finding out, and even in ignorance he was being led to perfect knowledge.

Chapter 4

How, clad in a poor man's garments, he ate with the poor before Saint Peter's church: and of the offering that he made there

8. But even now he was the chief lover of the poor, even now his holy beginnings gave a hint of the perfection he was to attain. Accordingly he often stript himself to clothe the poor, striving already with his whole heart to become like them, though not as yet executing his purpose in deed. Once when going on pilgrimage to Rome he put off his choice apparel for Poverty's sake, and covered with a poor man's clouts joyfully sat down among the poor in the parvis before Saint Peter's church (a place abounding in poor), and eagerly ate with them, deeming himself as one of them. Many times he would have done the like, had he not been ashamed of doing it before those who knew him.

When he came to the altar of the chief of the Apostles he wondered that the offerings of the visitors there were so small, and threw down a handful of money at that place, thus pointing out that special honour should be paid by all to him whom God honoured above the rest.

Several times also he presented poor priests with church ornaments; and he paid due respect to them all, even to them of lower degree. For, as one who was about to take on him the apostolic commission and was whole and entire in the Catholic faith, he was from the first full of reverence toward the ministers and service of God.

Chapter 5

How as he was praying the devil showed him a woman; and concerning the answer which God gave him; and his treatment of lepers

9. Thus already beneath his worldly attire he wore the spirit of Religion, and, withdrawing from frequented places to solitary ones, he was full often admonished by visitations of the Holy Ghost. For he was carried away and drawn on by that chiefest sweetness which was shed upon him so abundantly even from the first that it never left him as long as he lived. But while he was frequenting hidden places (as being suitable for prayer) the Devil strove to disturb his devotions by a malign counterfeit. He made him think of a certain woman, an inhabitant of his city, who was monstrously hunchbacked and presented a hideous sight to all: and he threatened to make him resemble her if he did not give up what he had begun. But the Lord of salvation and of grace encouraged him, and he rejoiced as he heard this answer: "Francis," said God to him in the spirit, "thou shalt exchange what thou hast loved carnally and vainly for spiritual things; and, if thou wilt acknowledge Me, take thou the bitter instead of the sweet, and despise thyself, for the savour of the things whereof I speak to thee shall be to thee reversed". Forthwith he was compelled to obey the Divine behests, and was led to actual experience; for among all the wretched spectacles of the world Francis naturally shrank from lepers; and one day while he was riding near Assisi he met a leper, and though the leper caused him no small disgust and horror, still, lest like a transgressor of the commandment he should break the obligation of his plighted faith, he dismounted and hastened to the leper in order

to kiss him: and when the leper held out his hand as though to receive something, he received money and a kiss with it. Francis immediately remounted, and as he looked round this way and that, though the country was free and open on all sides and there were no obstacles, he could not see that leper at all: whereat he was filled with wonder and joy, and a few days after gave heed to do the like again. He went to the abodes of lepers and, as he gave each leper money, he kissed him on the hand and mouth. Thus he took the bitter instead of the sweet, and manfully prepared to perform the rest.

Chapter 6

Of the image of the Crucified which spoke to him, and of the honour he paid to it

10. Being now perfectly changed in heart (and soon to be changed in body too) he was walking one day by the church of Saint Damian, which was almost ruinous, and was forsaken of all men. Led by the Spirit, he went in to pray. He fell down before the crucifix in devout supplication, and, having been smitten by unwonted visitations, found himself another man than he who had gone in. And, while he was thus moved, straightway - a thing unheard of for ages - the painted image of Christ crucified moved its lips and addressed him, calling him by name: "Francis," it said, "go repair My house, which as thou seest is wholly falling into ruin". Francis, trembling and in no small amazement, became well-nigh deranged by this address. He prepared to obey and was wholly intent on fulfilling the commandment. But forasmuch as he felt that the change he had undergone was ineffable, it becomes us to be silent concerning that which he himself could not express. Thenceforth compassion for the Crucified was fixed in his holy soul, and (as we may piously suppose) the stigmata of the venerable Passion were deeply imprinted on his heart though not as yet on his flesh, (11) A wondrous thing and unheard of in our times! Who is not amazed at this? Who ever heard the like? Who doubts that Francis now returning to his native land appeared crucified when, though he had not altogether set aside the world outwardly, Christ by a new and unheard-of miracle spoke to him from the wood of the Cross? From that hour therefore when the Beloved spake to

him, his soul was melted: and ere long the love of the heart appeared by the wounds of the body. Thenceforth, therefore, he could not refrain from weeping, even bewailing aloud the Passion of Christ ever as it were set forth before his eyes. He filled the ways with groanings, nor would he be comforted, as he remembered the wounds of Christ. He met an intimate friend, to whom he disclosed the cause of his grief, and forthwith his friend was moved to tears of woe.

But he did not forget to take thought for that holy image, nor did he in any wise neglect its bidding. Straightway he gave money to some priest that he might buy a lamp and oil, lest the sacred image should be defrauded, even for a moment, of its due honour of light. Then he diligently hastened to accomplish the rest; and gave untiring toil to the repair of that church. For, though the Divine words addressed to him referred to that Church which Christ acquired by His own Blood, he would not reach the highest point suddenly, for he was about to pass gradually from the flesh to the spirit.

Chapter 7

Of the persecution of his father and his brother after the flesh

12. But now that he was applying himself to works of piety his father after the flesh persecuted him, and, deeming Christ's service madness, he assailed him everywhere with curses. So God's servant called to his aid a certain low-born and very simple man whom he adopted in the stead of his father, asking him that when his father redoubled his curses, he on the contrary should bless him. Truly he turned the prophet's word into action and showed by deeds what that saying betokens: "They shall curse but thou shalt bless".

At the persuasion of the bishop of the city, a very pious man, who told him that he might not spend anything ill-gotten l on sacred purposes, Francis gave up to his father some money he had meant to lay out on the work at the said church; and in the hearing of the many who had come together, "Henceforth," he cried, "I may freely say 'our Father who art in heaven,' not any more 'father Pietro di Bernardone,' to whom lo! I not only restore the money but give up all my clothes. 1 Naked therefore will I go to the Lord." (O liberal

spirit of the man to whom now Christ alone is sufficient!) It was then found that the man of God had been wearing sackcloth under his clothes, rejoicing rather in the reality than in the appearance of virtue. His brother after the flesh, even as his father, pursued him with venomous words; and one winter morning, seeing Francis at prayer clothed in rags and shivering with cold, that wicked man said to one of his fellow-townsmen, "Ask Francis to sell you now a pennyworth of sweat". But when the man of God heard this he was filled with gladness and answered with a smile, "Indeed I will sell my sweat very dear to my Lord". Nothing more true: for he received not only a hundred but a thousandfold more in this life, and won not for himself alone but also for many eternal life hereafter.

Chapter 8

Of the bashfulness which he conquered; and of his prophecy of the Poor Virgins

13. And so he strove to reverse his former delicate way of life and to bring his body from luxurious indulgence back to natural goodness.

One day the man of God was going through Assisi to beg for oil that he might trim the lamps in Saint Damian's church which he was then repairing; and when he saw a crowd of men at play before the house he wanted to go into he was filled with shame and drew back. But then, directing that noble spirit of his to heaven, he reproved his own cowardice and passed judgment on himself. Straightway he went back to the house, set forth aloud before all the cause of his shame, and in a kind of spiritual intoxication asked in French for oil and received it. Most fervently did he stir up all to the work of that church; and in the hearing of all he prophesied, speaking in clear tones in French, that there would be a monastery of holy virgins of Christ in that place. For whenever he was filled with the ardour of the Holy Spirit he would utter ardent words in French; foreknowing that among that people he would receive peculiar honour and be revered with special regard.

Chapter 9

Of his begging for food from door to door

14. From the time when he began to serve the common Lord of all he ever loved to do common things, avoiding in everything singularity, which is befouled with the blemish of every vice. And so while he was toiling at the work on the church concerning which he had received a command from Christ, and from being a very delicately nurtured man had become a hard-working peasant, the priest of the church, seeing that he was worn out by assiduous labour, was moved with pity, and began to supply him every day with some special food, though it was not dainty, because the priest was poor. But though Francis approved of the priest's discernment and welcomed his kindness, he said to himself, "Thou wilt not find this priest everywhere to supply thee always with such things. This is not the life of a man professing poverty; it is not good for thee to get accustomed to such treatment; by degrees thou wilt return to what thou hast despised; and wilt once more run after delicacies. Arise now quickly and beg from door to door for scraps of food." So he went from door to door in Assisi, begging for cooked victuals, and when he saw his bowl full of odds and ends he was at first filled with loathing; but then he thought of God, conquered himself, and ate the food with delight of spirit. Love softens all things and makes every sweet thing bitter.

Chapter 10

Of brother Bernard's renunciation of his property

15. One Bernard of the city of Assisi (who was afterwards a son of perfection) was framing his mind perfectly to set at naught the world after the man of God's example, and humbly besought his advice. And so as he consulted him he said, "Father, if any one had for a long time been in possession of some lord's goods, and did not wish to keep them any longer, how should he dispose of them most perfectly?" The man of God answered, that they must all be given back to his lord, from whom he had received them. Then said Bernard, "I acknowledge that all my possessions were given me by God, and now here I stand, ready to give them back to Him, according to thy advice". "If thou wilt prove thy words by deeds," said the Saint, u let us go to church early in the morning, take the book of the Gospel, and seek counsel of Christ." So in the morning they went to church, and, after devout prayer, opened the book of

the Gospel, resolved to fulfil the first counsel they should happen on. They laid open the book and Christ therein laid open His counsel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all thou hast and give to the poor". They did it a second time, when "Take nothing on the way" met their eye. They tried yet a third time, when they found, "He who will come after Me, let him deny himself". Without delay Bernard fulfilled all these things, nor did he fail in so much as a jot of this counsel.

In a short time very many were turned from the corroding cares of the world, and to their infinite advantage returned under Francis' guidance to their native land. It would be too long to go on and tell how each one attained the prize of the high calling.

Chapter 11

Of the similitude which he set forth before the Pope

16. At the time when Francis presented himself with his followers before Pope Innocent to ask for a Rule for their life, the Pope, who saw that Francis' proposed way of life was beyond his strength, being a man of the utmost discernment, said to him, "Pray, my son, to Christ, that through thee He may show us His will; and when we know it we shall be able more safely to comply with thy pious desires". The Saint obeyed the Supreme Pastor's bidding and confidently flew to Christ. He prayed earnestly and encouraged his companions to pray devoutly to God. To be brief, he obtained an answer by prayer and imparted to his sons news of salvation. Christ's familiar discourse was made known in parables: "Francis," He said, "thus shalt thou say to the Pope: A poor but beautiful woman dwelt in a wilderness. A king loved her for her exceeding comeliness. He married her gladly, and begat beauteous sons by her. When they were grown and had been nobly brought up their mother said to them, 'Be not ashamed, beloved, that ye are poor, for ye are all sons of that great king. Go therefore gladly to his court and ask him for all that ye need.' As they heard this, they wondered and rejoiced; and, heartened by the assurance of their royal origin, deemed all want to be riches, knowing that they would be heirs. They boldly presented themselves to the king nor feared the face of him whose image they bore. The king, recognising his own likeness in them, inquired with wonder whose sons they were. And while

they affirmed that they were the sons of that poor woman dwelling in the wilderness, the king embraced them and said, 'Ye are my sons and heirs, fear not. For if strangers are fed from my table it is the more just that I should cause them to be fed for whom my whole inheritance is reserved by law.' So the king sent to the woman bidding her despatch all the sons whom he had begotten to be nourished at his court." The Saint was glad and rejoiced at the parable, and straightway reported the sacred oracle to the Pope.

17. This woman was Francis, fruitful in many sons not fashioned in softness. The wilderness was the world, at that time untilled and barren in the teaching of virtue. The beauteous and ample progeny of sons was the multitude of the brethren adorned with every virtue. The king was the Son of God, to Whom they, resembling Him in holy poverty, correspond in appearance; and they receive nourishment from the king's table, despising all cowardly shame, for that, content to imitate Christ, and living on alms, they know, amid the reproaches of the world, that they are to be blessed.

The Lord Pope wondered at the parable put before him, and acknowledged without hesitation that Christ had spoken in the man. He recalled a vision that he had himself seen a few days before, and affirmed, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that it also would be fulfilled in this man. He had seen in his sleep that the Lateran basilica was on the point of falling and that a certain Religious, a man small and despised, was propping it on his own back, that it might not fall. "Surely," said he, "this is he who by his acts and teaching shall prop the Church of Christ." Whence it was that that lord so readily yielded to his request, and that, filled with devotion to God, he ever loved Christ's servant with special affection. And so he quickly granted what he had been asked, and earnestly promised to grant yet greater things than these. And thenceforth by virtue of the authority conferred on him Francis began to scatter the seeds of virtue, preaching yet more fervently as he went about the cities and fortresses.

Chapter 12

Of Saint Maria de Portiuncula

18. God's servant Francis, small in person, humble in mind, a

"Minor" by profession, chose, while living in the world, for himself and his brethren a "little portion" {portiuncula) of the world, since otherwise, without having anything of the world, he could not serve Christ. Now it was not without the foreknowledge of a Divine oracle that from ancient days the place which was to fall to the lot of them who desired to have nothing at all of the world had been called Portiuncula. There also had been built a church of the Virgin Mother who by her unexampled humility was found worthy to be the head of all the Saints next after her Son. There the Order of Friars Minor began, and there as on a firm foundation the noble fabric of them in manifold number arose. This place the Saint loved above all others, this he bade his brethren respect with special reverence, this he willed ever to be kept as the mirror of the Religion in the utmost humility and poverty, reserving the property therein to others and retaining but the use of it for himself and his brethren. (19) The strictest discipline was observed there in all things, as well in respect of silence and work as of the other ordinances of the Rule. No one might be admitted there except specially appointed brethren gathered from all quarters whom the Saint would have to be truly devoted to God and perfect in every respect. So also access to it was entirely forbidden to all persons of the world. He would not have the brethren who dwelt there (who were limited to a certain number) itching to hear news of the world; lest their contemplation of heavenly things should be interrupted and they be dragged down by tattlers to lower intercourse. No one there might utter idle words or repeat them if uttered by others: and if at any time any one happened to do so, punishment taught him to be careful in future not to do it again. Those who abode there were occupied incessantly day and night in praising God, and, fragrant with a wondrous perfume, led a life of angels. And rightly so: for, as old inhabitants reported, the place used to be otherwise called Saint Mary of the Angels.

The happy father used to say that it had been revealed to him by God that among all other churches in the world built in her honour the Blessed Virgin loved this one with special affection; and therefore the Saint loved it more than all the rest.

Chapter 13

Of a certain vision

20. Before his conversion a certain devout brother had seen concerning this church a vision that is worth relating. He saw countless men smitten with woeful blindness kneeling round this church with their faces lifted toward heaven: and they were all stretching their hands upward and crying with lamentable voice to God, asking for mercy and light. And lo! there came a great brightness from heaven and spread itself over them all, giving light and longed-for healing to each one.

Of the Conversation of Saint Francis and the Brethren

Chapter 14

Of the rigour of discipline

21. Christ's strenuous knight never spared his body, but exposed it, as something alien to himself, to all ill-treatment both in deed and word. Any one who should enumerate the things this man endured would exceed that Apostolic passage (Hebrews 11:35-38) wherein the distresses of the Saints are rehearsed. Moreover, all that first school so subjected themselves to every discomfort that it was thought wickedness for any one to refresh himself by aught save the consolation of the Spirit. And whereas they girded and clothed themselves with iron hoops and coats of mail and afflicted themselves with many vigils and continual fasts, they would have succumbed many a time had they not relaxed the rigour of such abstinence at the diligent admonition of their tender shepherd.

Chapter 15

Of Saint Francis' discretion

22. One night one of the sheep cried out, the rest being asleep: "I am dying, brethren - see, I am dying of hunger!" The good shepherd arose forthwith, and hastened to minister the fitting remedy to the ailing sheep. He bade the table to be spread, though it were furnished with rustic cates alone, and (as often happened) water supplied the want of wine. He himself began first to eat, and invited the other brethren to share in this office of charity, lest that brother should pine from shame. Then after they had taken food in the fear of God, that nothing might fail of the office of charity the father discoursed at large to his sons on the virtue of discretion. He bade them ever yield to God a sacrifice seasoned with salt, carefully warning them each to have regard to his own strength in the service of God. To deprive the body indiscreetly of its due was, he said, a sin like that of giving it too much at the prompting of gluttony. And he added: "Know, dear brethren, that what I have done in eating

now, I have done by dispensation, not by inclination, at the bidding of brotherly charity. Let the charity be your example, not the food; for food ministers to gluttony, but charity to the spirit."

Chapter 16

Of his foreseeing the future. How he committed the Religion to the Church of Rome: and of a certain vision

23. As the holy father continued to profit in virtue and in the merits of his life, while the stock of his sons was now spreading everywhere and multiplying in numbers and grace, and was stretching forth branches wondrous for their fertility in fruits, he began often to ponder anxiously how that new planting might be preserved and increase, bound together by the bond of unity. At that time he saw very many raging like wolves against the little flock, and men grown old in evil taking occasion from the mere fact of its youth to do it harm. He foresaw that even among his sons things contrary to holy peace and charity might occur, and he doubted that (as often happens among the elect) some, puffed up by carnal feeling, and in spirit quarrelsome and prone to discord, might rebel. (24) And while the man of God was often meditating on these and similar things, one night he saw this vision in his sleep. He beheld a little black hen, like a tame dove, whose legs and feet were feathered all over. She had countless chicks which pressed eagerly round her but could not all be gathered under her wings. The man of God arose from sleep, recalled his meditations, and himself became the interpreter of his vision. "I am this hen," said he, "small in stature and black by nature, who ought through innocence of life to be attended by that dove-like simplicity, which wings its rapid flight to heaven, even as it is most rare in the world. The chicks are the brethren, multiplied in number and in grace, whom Francis' strength suffices not to defend from the disturbance of men and the gainsaying of tongues. I will therefore go and commend them to the holy Church of Rome, that by the rod of her power the ill-disposed may be smitten and the children of God enjoy full freedom everywhere, to the increase of eternal salvation. So shall the sons acknowledge their mother's loving-kindnesses and ever attend her reverend footsteps with peculiar devotion. With her to protect it, no evil shall befall the Order, nor shall a son of Belial

pass through the vineyard of the Lord unpunished. Herself, our holy mother, shall be jealous for the glory of our poverty, nor will she suffer the fame of [our] humility to be darkened by the mists of pride. She will preserve inviolate in us the bonds of charity and peace and strike the froward with her sternest censure. The holy observance of Gospel purity shall flourish in her sight continually, nor will she suffer the fragrance of [her children's] life to vanish even for an hour." This was the whole intention of the Saint of God when he determined so to commend himself. These were the holy teachings of the man of God's foresight concerning the necessity for such a measure against the time to come.

Chapter 17

How he asked to have the Lord of Ostia for a Pope

25. So the man of God came to Rome and was received by the Lord Pope Honorius and all the Cardinals with great respect; for that which had been fragrant in report shone in his life and sounded on his tongue; and when this is the case there is no room for disrespect. He preached before the Pope and Cardinals with readiness and fervour, giving full utterance to all the promptings of his spirit. The mountains were moved at his word, and heaving deep sighs from their profound recesses bathed the inner man with tears. When the sermon was ended, after a few words of friendly discourse with the Lord Pope, Francis at length petitioned him as follows: "My lord, as you know, access to such Majesty as yours is not readily granted to men poor and despised. You hold the world in your hands, and businesses of vast moment allow you not to attend to the smallest matters. Wherefore (he said) I beg of your Holiness' compassion that this Lord of Ostia may be granted us for a Pope, to the end that, saving always the dignity of your pre-eminence, the brethren may resort to him in time of need and fetch from him the benefits both of protection and of governance." So holy a petition was pleasing in the Pope's sight, and presently (as the man of God had asked) he set the Lord Hugo, then Bishop of Ostia, over the Religion. That holy Cardinal welcomed the flock entrusted to him, became their diligent foster-father, and continued [at once] their shepherd and their nursling until his blessed decease. To [this] special subjection are due the privilege of love

and the care which the Holy Roman Church has never ceased to display to the Order of Friars Minor.

END OF THE FIRST PART

Introduction to the Second Part

26. The preservation of the noble deeds of forefathers in the memory of their children is a token of the honour of the former and of the love of the latter. Verily those who have not seen in the body their forefathers are provoked to that which is good and advanced to that which is better by the mere hearing of their exploits when the evidences of their memorable deeds bring them before the children from whom they are separated by the lapse of time. And in the first place we gain from this no little profit - I mean the knowledge of our own littleness, when we see how great was the abundance of their merits, and how great is the lack of ours.

Now I deem blessed Francis to have been a most holy mirror of the holiness of the Lord, and an image of His perfection. All this man's words, I say, and all his deeds have a certain Divine savour, and if they be looked into by a diligent and humble disciple they will soon imbue him with wholesome discipline and make him acceptable to that supreme philosophy.

Therefore though I have already written some things concerning him - in humble style indeed and as it were in passing - I think it not superfluous to add some few things out of many whereby both the Saint may be commended and our slumbering affection aroused.

Of Saint Francis' Spirit of Prophecy

Chapter 1

Of the spirit of prophecy that blessed Francis had

27. The blessed father, borne up by a certain exaltation above mundane things, had by wondrous power brought into subjection whatever is on earth, for, ever directing the eye of the intellect to the Supreme Light, not only did he know by Divine revelation what was to be done, but he foretold many things by the spirit of prophecy. He peered into the secrets of the heart, was conscious of things absent, and foretold the future.

Examples prove what we say.

Chapter 2

How he knew that one who was thought holy was counterfeit

28. There was a brother, so far as could be seen outwardly, of uncommon holiness; exemplary in life, but very singular. He applied himself continually to prayer, and kept silence with such strictness that his custom was to confess not by words but by signs. The words of Scripture filled him with great ardour, and after hearing them he relished them with wondrous sweetness. In short, he was deemed by all thrice holy. It happened that the blessed father came to the "place," saw the brother and heard [him called a] saint. When all were commending and magnifying him the father replied: "Give it up, brethren, and don't praise the Devil's counterfeits in him to me! Know in truth that this is a devilish temptation and a fraudulent deception. I am sure of it, and his refusing to confess is the strongest proof that it is so." The brethren took this ill, and especially the Saint's vicar. "And how," said they, "can it be true that amid so many tokens of perfection we are being cheated by fraudulent counterfeits?" The father answered, "Let him be admonished to confess twice, or [at least] once in a week: and if he will not do it, you will know that what I have said is true." The vicar took him aside, and after first rallying him in a friendly way,

finally enjoined him to confess. He refused, intimating by putting his finger to his mouth and shaking his head that he would by no means confess. The brethren were silent, fearing to scandalize the false saint. Not many days after, he left the Religion of his own accord, turned again to the world, and went back to his vomit. At length, redoubling his misdeeds, he was deprived at once of penitence and of life.

We should ever be on our guard against singularity, which is nothing else but a fair-seeming precipice: and with regard to it, several singular ones have found by experience that they ascend to the heavens and then go down to the abyss. But give heed to the virtue of devout confession, for it not only makes a man holy but shows that he is so.

Chapter 3

A similar case. Against singularity

29. A similar case was that of another brother A named Thomas of Spoleto. The entire belief and fixed idea of all was that he was a saint: but his apostasy proved at length the truth of the holy father's judgment that he was wicked. He did not long continue [in the Order] because virtue sought by fraud is not lasting; but left it and died outside it. Now he knows what he did.

Chapter 4

How he foretold the overthrow of the Christians at Damietta

30. At the time when the army of the Christians was besieging Damietta, the Saint of God and some of his companions were there, for they had crossed the sea in their ardour for martyrdom. And when our soldiers were preparing for battle on a certain day, the holy man heard of it, and was exceedingly grieved, and said to his companion: "If they fight on such a day the Lord hath showed me that the Christians will not prosper. But if I tell them this I shall be deemed a fool, while if I keep silence I shall not elude my conscience. What, then, thinkest thou?" His companion answered: "Make no account of being judged by men, for thou art not now first beginning to be deemed a fool. Discharge thy conscience, and fear

God rather than men." So the Saint arose and gave salutary warning to the Christians, urging them not to fight, and announcing disaster if they did. But they turned the truth into ridicule, hardened their hearts and refused to be warned. They went, they joined battle, they fought and our men were hard pressed by the foe. During the fight the Saint being in suspense made his companion go up to watch; and as he saw nothing the first and second times he bade him look out the third time: and, lo! the Christian army was in full flight, ending the day in shame and not in triumph. So great were the losses of our men in this disaster that 6,000 were killed and captured. (29 August 1219) The Saint was full of compassion for our men, nor were they less full of regret for what they had done. But he specially mourned over the Spaniards, when he saw that their greater impetuosity in fighting had left but a few of them remaining. Let the princes of the world take cognisance of these things, and know that it is not easy to fight against God, that is, against the Lord's will. Frowardness is wont to end in destruction, for while it relies on its own strength it deserves not help from heaven. But if victory is to be hoped for from on high, battles must be fought in the spirit of God.

Chapter 5

Of a brother the secrets of whose heart he knew

31. At the time when Saint Francis was returning from beyond the sea, having brother Leonard of Assisi as his companion, it chanced that, being weary with the journey, he was riding for a while on an ass. His companion was walking behind, and being not a little tired, yielded a little to mortal weakness, and began to say to himself: "This man's parents and mine were not wont to play together as equals. But now he is riding, and I on foot am driving his ass! "While this thought was passing through his mind the holy man dismounted forthwith, saying: "No, brother, it is not meet that I should ride and thou be walking, because in the world thou wast nobler and mightier than I". Brother Leonard was abashed; he turned red, and knew that the holy man had seen through him; he fell at his feet, and, bathed in tears, laid bare his thought, and asked for pardon.

Chapter 6

Of the brother over whom he saw a devil. Against those who withdraw from unity

32. There was another brother, distinguished by fame among men, and still more distinguished through grace in the sight of God. Now the father of all envy envied this man for his virtues and thought to cut down the tree that was already touching heaven and to snatch the crown away from his hands. He encompassed, overturned, battered and sifted the things that were his, (*"The things that were his" seems to mean the various elements forming the brother's character; the idea being that the Devil ransacked the brother's character in order to discover its weakest point. -ed*) if by any means he might put a fitting obstacle in that brother's way. And so he inspired him with a desire of solitude, under the semblance of greater perfection, in order that he might at length rush upon him alone and make him fall the quicker, and that falling alone he might have none to lift him up. To be brief, that brother severed himself from the Religion of the brethren and wandered through the world like a stranger and a pilgrim. Of the tunic of his habit he made a little tunic, with the hood detached; and so he went about, despising himself in everything. Now it came to pass that while he was thus wandering, God's comfort was soon withdrawn from him, and he was tossed by a storm of temptations. The waters came in even unto his soul, and his inward and outward man being thus made desolate, he went along like a bird hastening to the snare. And even now he was, as it were, close to the abyss, and being borne headlong over the precipice, when the eye of fatherly providence pitied the wretch and looked upon him in kindness. And so he recovered his understanding by affliction, and at last he came to himself and said, "Return, wretched one, to Religion, for there is thy salvation!" He tarried not, but arose straightway and hastened to his mother's bosom. (33) And when he came to the "place" of the brethren in Siena Saint Francis was there: and as soon as the Saint saw him (wonderful to say) he fled from him, hurried to a cell and shut himself in. The excited brethren inquired the cause of his flight: and he said to them, "Why do you wonder at my flight, heeding not the cause? I fled to the protection of prayer that I might deliver the erring one. I saw in my son that which gave [me] just displeasure: but lo! now by the grace of my Christ all his delusion has departed." The brother fell on his knees and with shame owned himself guilty.

"The Lord forgive thee, brother," said the Saint, "but beware in future of withdrawing from thy Religion and from the brethren under an appearance of holiness." Accordingly the said brother became a friend of the Congregation and Fellowship, being especially attached to those communities wherein the observance of the Rule thrives most.

O how great are the works of the Lord in the council and assembly of the righteous! For therein those molested [by temptation] are restrained, the crushed are raised up, the lukewarm are aroused, therein "iron sharpeneth iron," and brother helped by brother is established like a strong city. And though thou cannot see Jesus for the worldly throng, the angelic throng of heaven in nowise hinders thee. Only fly not, and being faithful unto death thou shalt receive the crown of life.

Another similar case

34. Shortly afterwards something of the same sort happened in the case of another. One of the brethren would not submit to the Saint's Vicar but followed another brother as his own superior. But after that the Saint, who was present, had admonished him through a messenger, he threw himself straightway at the Vicars feet, set at nought his first superior, and obeyed the one whom the Saint had appointed for him. But the Saint sighed deeply and said to his companion (the messenger whom he had sent): "Brother, I saw a devil on the disobedient brother's back, clutching him by the neck. He had despised the curb of obedience and was following the reins of the rider's impulses by whom he had been subdued. And (he added) when I prayed the Lord for that brother, suddenly the devil departed in confusion." This man's sight was such that though for bodily things his eyes were weak, for spiritual they were acute.

And what wonder if he who will not bear the Lord of Majesty is weighed down by a shameful burden? There is no middle course, I say: Either thou shalt bear a light burden (whereby rather thou shalt be borne), or else wickedness, heavier than a talent of lead, (Zechariah 5:7-8) shall sit [on thee], a great mill-stone hanging about thy neck.

Chapter 7

How he delivered the men of Greccio from wolves and from hail

35. The Saint was fond of staying in the "place" of the brethren of Groccio, both because he saw that it was rich in poverty and because in a secluded cell hewn out of a projecting rock he could more freely devote himself to heavenly discipline. (This is the place wherein long ago he revived the birthday of the Child of Bethlehem, becoming a child with the Child.) Now it came to pass that the inhabitants were being plagued with manifold evils: for a multitude of ravening wolves were devouring not only brutes but men, and yearly storms of hail were laying waste the cornfields and vineyards. But one day, as Saint Francis was preaching to them, he said: u To the honour and praise of Almighty God, listen to the truth which I announce to you. If each one of you confesses his sins and brings forth worthy fruits of penitence, I pledge my word to you that this plague shall wholly depart, and that the Lord shall look upon you and multiply you in temporal goods. But hear this also: Again I announce to you that if ye shall be ungrateful for His benefits and return to your vomit, the plague shall be renewed, the punishment doubled, and greater wrath shall prevail against you." (36) And so by the holy father's merits and prayers it came to pass that from that hour the destruction ceased, the dangers passed away, nor did wolves nor hail cause any further mischief. Nay, what is more, whenever hail came over their neighbours' land, as it approached their own borders it either ceased there or passed off elsewhere. Repose having been granted them they were multiplied exceedingly and filled exceedingly with temporal goods. But prosperity did what it is wont to do: for their faces became covered with the grossness and fat of temporal things, or rather, they were blinded with dung. At last they fell back into worse, and forgot God who had saved them; but not with impunity, for God's judgment punishes the lapsed less heavily than the relapsed. The fury of God was aroused against them, and the evils that had departed returned, and there was added to them the sword of man; a pestilence ordained from heaven consumed very many of the people, and at length the whole fortress was burnt up with avenging flames.

Verily it is just that those who turn their backs on benefits should come to destruction.

Chapter 8

How in preaching to the Perugians he foretold that there would be sedition among them: and of his commendation of unity

37. Some days afterwards, while the blessed father was once coming down from the aforesaid cell, he said in mournful tones to the brethren who were present: "The men of Perugia have done much evil to their neighbours, and their heart is lifted up, which shall be for their ignominy. But the vengeance of the Lord is nigh: and His hand is on His sword." And a few days later he arose in fervour of spirit, and turned his course toward Perugia. The brethren might [therefore] surely take it that he had seen some vision in the cell. So when he came to Perugia he began to preach to the assembled people; but when the knights (after their manner) rode up armed and hindered the Word of God with warlike sports, he turned to them, and said with groaning: "O wretched men, pitiable is your folly in not heeding nor fearing God's judgment! But hear what the Lord announces to you by me, the little poor man. The Lord hath exalted you above all that are round about' you; wherefore ye ought to be kinder to your neighbours, and more thankful to God; but. unthankful for favour, you attack, kill and plunder your neighbours with armed hand. I tell you this shall not be left unpunished, and for your heavier punishment God shall make you fall by intestine war, so that one shall rise up against another in mutual sedition. Wrath shall teach those whom kindness has not instructed."

Not many days later discord arose among them; neighbours took up arms against neighbours, the burghers attacked the knights, the nobles in their turn fell upon the plebeians; and at last they fought with such fury, and there was such slaughter, that the very neighbours around, whom they had wronged, grieved with them.

A judgment worthy of praise! for, since they had withdrawn from the One Supreme, it was impossible that unity should remain among them. There can be no stronger bond in a state than duteous love to God, and faith sincere and unfeigned.

Chapter 9

Of the woman to whom he foretold that her bad husband would become good

38. In those days when the man of God was on his way to Cella di Cortona a noble woman of the fortress called Volusiano heard of it, and hastened to go to him. At length she came to him, wearied with the long journey (for she was very delicate and tender), and when the most holy father saw her tired and panting he pitied her, and said: u What is thy pleasure, lady?" She answered: "Father, that thou wouldst bless me". And he asked: "Art thou married or unmarried?" "Father," she replied, "I have a very cruel husband who is an adversary to me in serving Jesus Christ, and my greatest grief is that I cannot perform the good will wherewith the Lord has inspired me, because my husband hinders me; wherefore I beseech thee, holy man, pray for him that God's mercy may soften his heart." The father wondered to see a man's spirit in a woman, the wisdom of the aged in a girl, and moved by pity, said: "Go, blessed daughter, and know that thou shalt soon have consolation of thy husband". And he added: "Tell him on God's behalf and on mine that now is the time of salvation, and afterwards that of justice". Having received this blessing the woman returned home, found her husband and told him these words. Forthwith the Holy Ghost fell upon him and caused him, having been changed from the old into a new man, with all gentleness to answer: "Lady, let us serve God and save our souls in our own house". His wife replied: "It seems to me that continence should be laid in the soul like a foundation and that the other virtues should afterwards be built upon it". "And this," he said, "is as pleasing to me as to thee." Thereafter they led a celibate life for a good many years and happily departed on the same day, one as a morning holocaust, the other as an evening sacrifice.

Happy woman thus to soften her lord unto life! In her is fulfilled the Apostle's saying: "The unbelieving husband hath been saved by the believing wife". But such (to use a common expression) may be counted on one's fingers nowadays.

Chapter 10

How he knew by the spirit that one brother had caused scandal to another, and foretold that the former would quit the Religion

39. Two brethren came once from Terra di Lavoro the elder of whom caused much scandal to the younger. He was, I say, not a companion but a tyrant. But the younger bore it all in silence for God's sake. Now when they had reached Assisi and the younger had gone in to Saint Francis (for he was intimate with him) the Saint said among other things, "How has thy companion behaved toward thee on this journey?" "Oh, very well, dearest father," was the answer. "Beware, brother," replied the Saint, "of telling a lie from false humility: for I know how he has been behaving toward thee. But wait a little and thou shalt see." (The brother wondered very much how Saint Francis could have known in the spirit what had been passing at such a distance.) Accordingly after a few days the brother who had scandalized his companion set at naught the Order, and was expelled.

It is an undoubted token of perverseness and an evident proof of failing sense not to be of the same mind with a good companion when one is going on the same way with him.

Chapter 11

Of a lad who came to enter the Religion, but whom the Saint knew to be not led by the Spirit of God

40. In those days a boy of Lucca, of noble birth, A came to Assisi wishing to enter the Religion. He was presented to Saint Francis, and on bended knees prayed him with tears to receive him. But the man of God looked upon him, and immediately knew by the Spirit that he was not being driven by the Spirit, and said to him: "Unhappy and carnal boy, why dost thou trust in being able to lie to the Holy Spirit and to me? Thy weeping is carnal, and thy heart is not with God. Go, for thou savourest nothing spiritually." Hereupon it was announced that the boy's parents were at the door, seeking to take their son and fetch him home with them. So the boy went out to them and was persuaded at last to return of his own accord. But the brethren wondered and praised the Lord in His Saint.

Chapter 12

Of a clerk whom Saint Francis healed and to whom he foretold that he would suffer worse if he sinned again

41. At the time when the holy father lay sick in the palace of the Bishop of Rieti a certain dissolute and worldly canon named Gideon had been seized with illness and lay in bed compassed about on every side with pains. He had himself carried before Saint Francis and begged him with tears to sign him with the sign of the Cross. But Saint Francis said to him, "Since thou hast lived in the past according to the desires of the flesh without fearing God's judgments, how shall I sign thee with the Cross?" Then he said: "I sign thee in Christ's name; but know that if after having been delivered, thou return to thy vomit, thou shalt suffer heavier things". And he continued: "For the sin of ingratitude worse things than the former are ever added". So he made the sign of the Cross over him, and forthwith he who had been bowed together rose up whole, and cried, breaking forth into praise, "I am set free". (Now the bones of his loins, in the hearing of many, made a noise like that of dry pieces of wood broken by the hand.) But after a short time he forgot God and returned to unchastity of body: and one evening when after supper he was sleeping at the house of one of his fellow-canons, the roof suddenly fell in on all the company; the others all escaped death, and that wretched man alone was cut off, and perished. Nor is it wonderful if (as the Saint said) worse evils than the former came upon him; since one ought to be thankful for forgiveness received; and wrongdoing repeated is a double offence.

Chapter 13

Of a certain tempted brother

42. White the Saint was staying at the same place a certain spiritual brother (of the Custody of Marsica (*i.e., a district comprising a group of convents, under the jurisdiction of a "Custos". The district lay in the extreme South of the Abruzzi*)), who was vexed with grievous temptations, said in his heart: "Oh, if ever I could have with me some - even if only a few - of the parings of holy Francis' nails, I believe that all this storm of temptations would disperse, and peace return, by the Lord's favour". So, having obtained permission, he repaired to the place and set forth his case to one of the holy father's companions. This brother answered: "I do not think I can possibly give thee any of his nails; for, though we cut them for him sometimes, he orders the parings to be thrown away and forbids us

to keep them". Forthwith that brother was sent for, and ordered to go to the Saint, who was asking for him; and Saint Francis said to him: "Find me scissors, my son, to cut my nails with at once!" The brother handed the scissors, which he had already taken up for that purpose, picked up the parings, and gave them to the brother who had asked for them; and that brother, having received them devoutly, kept them still more devoutly, and was immediately delivered from every assault.

Chapter 14

Of a man who offered cloth such as the Saint had asked for before

43. At the same place the father of the poor was wearing a shabby old tunic, and one day he said to one of his companions whom he had appointed his warden: "I would, brother, that, if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me some cloth for a tunic". The brother, on hearing this, cast about in his mind how he might come by the cloth which was so necessary and had been so humbly asked for; and next morning at dawn he went to the gate intending to go to the village for the cloth, and by the door he found a man sitting who wanted to speak to him, and he said to that brother, "Do, for the love of God, accept from me cloth for six tunics. Keep one for thyself, and distribute the rest as it pleases thee, for the benefit of my soul!" The brother, filled with joy, returned to brother Francis, and told him of the offering made from heaven; and Francis said: "Accept the tunics, for the man has been sent [hither] that he might in such wise supply my need," adding: "Thanks be to Him who seems to take thought for us alone!"

Chapter 15

How he invited his physician to dinner when the brethren had nothing to eat; how the Lord suddenly supplied him plentifully; and of God's watchful care of His own.

44. While the blessed man was staying in a certain hermitage by Rieti a physician used to visit him daily for the cure of his eyes. But one day the Saint said to his companions, "Invite the doctor, and give him a very good dinner". The warden answered, "Father, we blush to say it, we are ashamed to invite him, so poor are we now".

"Why do you want me to tell you again?" answered the Saint. The doctor, who was standing by, said, "As for me, dearest brethren, I shall take your penury for delicacies". The brethren made haste and put the whole abundance of their store on the table, that is to say, a little bread and not much wine; and in order that the fare might be more sumptuous, the kitchen furnished a few vegetables. Meantime the table of God was taking pity on that of His servants. There was a knock at the door. It was answered forthwith and see! there was a woman presenting a basket full of fine bread, fish and pasties of crayfish, and heaped up with honey and grapes. There was joy at this sight round the table of the poor; and, keeping the common food for the morrow, they ate the dainties that day. But the doctor said with a sigh, "Brethren, neither do ye know this man's holiness as ye ought, nor do we of the world know it".

Finally, the miracle satisfied them more than the banquet; else had they not been satisfied. Even so that Father's eye never despises His children; but rather when they are beggars in the greatest need does a richer Providence feed them. And by how much God's bounty is more lavish than man's, by so much is the poor man fed at a more bountiful table than the tyrant. (The "Marseilles" manuscript here inserts (with no material difference) the story of brother Ricerio related above.)

Chapter 16

Of the two brethren whom he came out of his cell to bless, knowing their desire through the Spirit

45. It was Saint Francis' custom to pass the whole day in his cell alone, and not to come back to the brethren until compelled by the need of taking food. Nor used he to come out at the fixed meal-times; for more often than not he was wholly mastered by a greater craving for contemplation. Now, it happened once that two brethren of godly conversation came, to the "place" at Greccio from a long distance, the whole cause of their coming being their desire to see the holy man and to receive his long-coveted blessing. So when they arrived, and did not find him (for he had already retired from public view into his cell) they were wondrously afflicted, and, since the uncertainty concerning his return would impose on them a long delay, they withdrew in great sorrow, attributing their

disappointment to their unworthiness, and followed by blessed Francis' companions, who tried to comfort them in their desolation. But when they were gone about a stone's cast from the "place" suddenly the holy man cried after them, and said to one of his companions: "Tell my brethren who are come hitherto look back at me." And when the said brethren had turned their faces toward him he made the sign of the Cross over them, and affectionately blessed them. And they went back on their way praising and blessing the Lord, being the more joyful in that they had not only accomplished their purpose but obtained the greater advantage of a miracle.

Chapter 17

How by prayer he brought water out of a rock and gave it to a thirsting peasant

46. Once, when Saint Francis would go to a certain hermitage in order there to give himself more freely to contemplation, he borrowed from a poor man an ass to ride on, for he was very weak. It was in summer, and as the countryman followed the man of God up the mountain he became weary by reason of the length and steepness of the way, and before they reached the place he sank down, exhausted by parching thirst. He cried urgently after the Saint and begged him to take pity on him, saying that he should die unless he could be refreshed by the benefit of some drink. Without delay the Saint of God (who always pitied the distressed) dismounted, and fell on his knees, stretching up the palms of his hands to heaven, nor did he cease to pray until he felt that he had been heard. "Make haste," said he to the countryman, "and yonder thou wilt find water which Christ in mercy has brought to thee at this hour out of the stone to drink." O amazing condescension of God, which so readily bows down to His servants! The peasant drank water from the crag by the power of him who had prayed, and drained a draught out of the hardest rock. Water had never flowed there before, nor could any be found afterwards, as diligent search has proved. What wonder if a man full of the Holy Ghost, should show forth again in himself the wondrous deeds of all the righteous? For when a man is joined to Christ by a gift of special grace it is no great thing if he performs works like those of the other Saints.

Chapter 18

Of the birds he fed, and how one of them perished through greed

47. One day blessed Francis was sitting at table with the brethren, when two little birds, cock and hen, came up, eager about the bringing-up of their new-born chicks, and took away crumbs as they liked from the holy man's table. So they did every day afterwards. The holy man, who took pleasure in such creatures, made them welcome (as he was wont), and offered them grain [which he had got] on purpose. One day the father and mother offered their chicks to the brethren, as having been reared at their cost; and having made them over, did not appear in that place any more. The young birds became very familiar with the brethren; they would sit on their hands, and dwelt in the house, not as guests but as if they were at home. They shunned the sight of lay-folk, and professed themselves nurslings of the brethren only.

The Saint observed this with astonishment, and invited the brethren to rejoice: "Look," said he, "at what our brothers the redbreasts have done: just as if they were gifted with reason! For they have said: 'See, brothers, we present you with our chicks who have been fed with your crumbs: do with them what you will. We betake ourselves to another home.'" So the little birds made themselves quite at home with the brethren, and took their food peaceably. But greed broke up their concord, for the biggest got uplifted and persecuted the smaller ones; for when he had eaten as much as he wanted, he drove the rest away from the food. "See," said Saint Francis, "what this greedy bird is doing. Though full and satisfied himself, he grudges against his hungry brothers: he will come to a bad end yet! "The punishment followed instantly on the words of the Saint. The disturber of his brethren went up on a vessel of water to drink, and immediately fell in and was drowned; nor was any cat or other beast found who durst touch the creature cursed by the Saint. Horrible indeed is greed in men when it is thus punished in birds! Moreover the sentence of the Saints should be feared, when punishment follows so close upon it.

Chapter 19

How all his predictions about brother Bernard were fulfilled

48. At another time he spoke prophetically thus ii concerning brother Bernard who had been the second to enter the Order: "I tell you that there have been assigned to brother Bernard, to try him, the most subtle devils, and spirits more wicked than the rest; but though they are ever eagerly watching hov they may make the star fall from the sky, the thin, shall turn out otherwise: he shall be troubled, tormented, afflicted, but at last he shall triumph over all." And he added: "At his death, when all the storms have cleared away and every temptation has been overcome he shall enjoy wondrous calm and peace, and, having finished his course, shall happily pass to Christ". And so indeed it was: his death was lit up by miracles: and the man of God's prediction was fulfilled to the letter. Accordingly the brethren said when he died: "Truly that brother was not known, while he lived". But we leave this Bernard's praises to be told by others.

Chapter 20

Of a tempted brother who would have some writing from the Saint's hand

49. While the Saint abode shut up in a cell on the mountain of La Verna, one of his companions longed with great desire to have for his refreshment a writing of words of the Lord briefly annotated by Saint Francis' hand. For he thought thereby to escape, or at least to endure more easily, a grievous temptation (not of the flesh but of the spirit) by which he was molested. Though languishing with his desire he feared to open the matter to the most holy father, but the Spirit revealed it to him, though man told him not. And one day blessed Francis called him, and said: "Bring me paper and ink, for I will write down words of God and His praises, which I have pondered in my heart". The materials he had asked for were brought forthwith, and with his own hand he wrote the praises of God and the words he chose to write, and lastly a blessing for that brother, saying: "Take this paper, and keep it diligently till the day of thy death". Immediately all that temptation was put to flight; the writing was preserved, and afterwards wrought wondrous things. (An account of this writing, with facsimile, will be found in R. Balfour's The Seraphic Keepsake. The brother to whom it was given was Leo.)

Chapter 21

Of that same brother, whose desire he fulfilled by giving him his tunic

50. Another thing was wondrously done for that same brother by the holy father: for while he lay sick in the palace at Assisi the said brother said to himself: "The father's death is approaching, and my soul would be exceedingly comforted if I might have my father's tunic after his death". As though his heart's desire had been his mouth's request, blessed Francis called him after a little while and said: "I make over to thee this tunic, accept it, that it may henceforth be thine. And though I wear it while I am alive, yet be it thine at my death." That brother wondered at the father's insight and was comforted at last by receiving the tunic: and afterwards holy devotion carried it into France.

Chapter 22

Of the parsley which at his command was found by night among wild herbs

51. One night towards the end of his last sickness [the blessed Francis] desired to eat some parsley, and humbly asked for it. When the cook was called to bring it, he answered that he could not then gather any in the garden, and said: "I have been picking parsley every day, and have gathered so much that I could scarce find any more even by daylight, and how much less could I distinguish it from other herbs now that it is dark?" "Go, brother," said the Saint, "never mind, and bring the first herbs thou touchest." The brother went into the garden, picked the wild herbs which first came to hand, for he saw nothing, and brought them to the house. The brethren looked at the wild herbs, turned them over carefully, and found among them a tender leafy bit of parsley, of which the Saint ate a little, and was greatly comforted. And the father said to the brethren: "My brethren, obey orders at once, and do not wait for them to be repeated; and do not allege that anything is impossible, for even were I to bid you do anything beyond your strength, obedience would not be wanting in strength."

Thus far the spirit of prophecy has spoken for the spiritual privilege [he enjoyed].

Chapter 23

Of the famine which he foretold would come after his death

52. Holy men are sometimes compelled by impulse of the Holy Ghost to utter wondrous things about themselves; that is to say, either when God's glory requires such a revelation to be made, or when the law of charity demands it for the edification of their neighbour. Hence it is that one day the blessed father imparted to one of the brethren whom he greatly loved this word which he had at that time brought from the council-chamber (familiar to him) of the Divine Majesty: "Today there is on the earth a servant of God for whose sake as long as he shall live God will not allow famine to rage against men".

Here was no vanity, but a holy recital which for our edification holy Charity, she that "seeketh not her own," uttered in holy, modest words: nor was the privilege of such wondrous love shown by Christ toward His servant to be passed over in unprofitable silence. For all we who were witnesses of it know how quietly and peacefully the times passed during which the servant of Christ lived, and how they abounded in fruitfulness of all good things. For there was no famine of God's word at that time when the preachers' words were most full of power and all the hearers' hearts were most acceptable to God. Patterns of holiness shone forth in religious semblance: (i.e., under the habit of the Order) the hypocrisy of whited men had not yet tainted so many holy ones, nor had the learning of dissemblers brought in such nicety. Temporal goods therefore deservedly abounded, since the eternal were so truly beloved by all.

53. Accordingly when he was removed the state of things was utterly reversed, and all was changed: for wars and seditions prevailed everywhere, and many kingdoms were suddenly laid low by divers kinds of death. Moreover, the horror of famine spread far and wide, whose cruelty, surpassing all other bitternesses, consumed very many. For need then turned everything into food, and compelled human teeth to chew things that brutes were not wont to eat. Accordingly nutshells and the bark of trees were made into bread; and, to use the gentlest expression, a father's tenderness, urged by famine, grieved not for a child's death; as became manifest by the confession of a certain man. But that it may appear more

plainly who that faithful servant was, for whose sake Divine chastisement stayed its hand from vengeance, the blessed father Francis a few days after his death plainly revealed to that same brother to whom he had foretold when alive the destruction to come, that he was that servant of God. For one night, when that brother was sleeping, Saint Francis called him with clear voice, saying: "Brother, now is coming the famine which, so long as I was alive, God did not suffer to come on the earth". The brother awoke at these words and afterwards related the whole in order. Three nights afterwards the Saint appeared to him a second time and uttered similar words.

Chapter 24

Of the Saint's splendour, and of our ignorance

54. It should seem strange to none if the prophet of our time shone with such privileges as these; in fact, being loosed from the darkness of earthly things and not subdued by the pleasure of the flesh, his mind being free flew to the highest, and being pure entered into the light. Thus, illumined by the flashes of eternal light, he derived from the Word that which sounded in [his own] words. Ah! how unlike him are we today who are wrapped in darkness and ignorant even of necessary things! Wherefore, think you, unless because we, being friends of the flesh, are ourselves also planted in the dust of worldliness? But if we would "lift up our hearts with our hands to heaven," if we would choose to hang on the things that are eternal, we should perhaps know what now we do not know - God and ourselves. He who dwells in the mire must needs see the mire: he whose eye is fixed on heaven cannot but see heavenly things.

Of Poverty

Chapter 25

Of Poverty and the praise of her

55. Placed in the vale of tears, that blessed father set at naught the common paltry wealth of the sons of men, and in his ambition to attain a more exalted height longed after Poverty with all his heart. Considering that she was the familiar friend of the Son of God, he strove in perpetual charity to espouse her, now that she was cast off by all the world. Therefore having become a lover of her beauty, in order that he might cleave yet closer to her as his wife, and that they two might be united in one spirit, not only did he leave his father and his mother, but even put all things from him. Therefore, he clasped her with chaste embraces, nor for an hour did he endure not to be her husband.

He would tell his sons that she was the way of perfection, that she was the pledge and earnest of eternal riches. No one was so greedy of gold as he of Poverty, no one more careful in guarding a treasure than he in guarding this pearl of the Gospel. Herein especially was his sight offended, if he saw in the brethren anything either at home or abroad contrary to poverty. Verily, he himself from the beginning of the Religion till his death was rich in a tunic only, a cord, and drawers, and had naught else. His poor habit showed where he was laying up his riches. Deriving hence gladness, confidence and freedom to run his course, he rejoiced in having exchanged perishable treasures for one a hundredfold greater.

Chapter 26

Of poverty in dwellings

56. He taught his brethren to make poor habitations, of wood, not of stone, and to build them as small houses on a humble plan. And often when talking of poverty he would urge on the brethren that Gospel saying: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the sky have nests: but the Son of God had not where to lay His head".

Chapter 27

Of the house at Portiuncula which he began to destroy

57. Once when a chapter was to be held at Saint Maria de Portiuncula, and the time was at hand, the people of Assisi, observing that there was no house there, in the man of God's absence and without his knowledge built with the utmost speed a house for the chapter to be held in. At length on his return he saw the house, and being deeply displeased, complained in no gentle tones. Presently he arose, the foremost to demolish the building, got upon the roof, and with strong hand tore down the slates and tiles. He bade the brethren also come up and remove that monstrous thing, far opposed to Poverty; for he said that anything savouring of arrogance that was seen in that place would quickly spread through the Order, and be taken by all as an example. Therefore he would have utterly destroyed that house if certain knights who were present had not resisted the fervour of his spirit by declaring that it belonged to the State, and not to the brethren.

Chapter 28

Of the house at Bologna from which he drove out the sick

58. Once when Saint Francis was returning from Verona, and was intending to go through Bologna, he was told "that a house of the brethren had just been built there". No sooner did he hear the words "a house of the brethren" than he turned aside and passed onward another way without going to Bologna. Furthermore he ordered all the brethren to leave the house with haste, in consequence of which, when the house was quitted, even the sick were not left behind, but turned out with the rest. Nor were they allowed to go back until the Lord Hugo (then Bishop of Ostia and Legate in Lombardy) had made it publicly known that the house belonged to him. He who was then turned out of the house sick bears witness to these things and writes them down.

Chapter 29

Of his refusing to enter a cell to which his name had been put

59. He would not let the brethren live in any dwelling, even a small one, unless it were sure that there was some owner to whom the property belonged; for he always aimed at his sons' observing the laws of pilgrims - namely, to be gathered under another's roof, to pass onward peaceably, and to thirst after their native land. So even in the hermitage of Sartiano, when one brother asked another where he was coming from, and the answer was "From brother Francis' cell," the Saint, on hearing it, replied: "Since thou hast put Francis' name to the cell, appropriating it to me, look out for another inhabitant for it, for I will not stay in it any more. The Lord (he said) when He was in the wilderness where He prayed and fasted forty days did not have a cell made there, nor any house, but abode beneath a rock of the mountain. We may follow Him in the manner enjoined by having nothing in the way of property; though we cannot live without having the use of houses."

Chapter 30

Of poverty in furniture

60. Not only did this man hate arrogance in respect of houses, but he had the utmost abhorrence of many or choice articles of furniture. He loved nothing in tables or vessels which might remind him of the world; to the end that everything might sing of pilgrimage and exile.

Chapter 31

Ensample concerning the table prepared at Greccio on Easter day, and how after Christ's example he showed himself in a pilgrim's guise

(note: An "ensample" in mediaeval phraseology is a moral tale.)

61. One Easter day the brethren at the hermitage of Greccio laid the table more carefully than usual, with white table-linen and glass vessels. The father came down from the cell, went to the table, and noticed that it was placed on high, and decked in vain fashion. But on the smiling table he by no means smiled. Stealthily and gradually he withdrew, put on his head the hat of a poor man who was there, and went out of doors, carrying a staff in his hand. He waited outside at the door for the brethren to begin; for they used

not to wait for him when he did not come at the signal. When they began to eat, that true poor man cried at the door: "For the love of the Lord God give alms to this poor sick pilgrim". The brethren answered: "Come in, good man, for the love of Him whom thou hast invoked". He came in at once, and appeared before them as they were eating. What, think you, was the amazement the pilgrim caused to the inhabitants? They gave him a dish, at his request, and, sitting alone on the ground [by the fire], he made the ashes his table, saying, "Now I am sitting like a Lesser Brother"; then to the brethren: "The example of the poverty of the Son of God should constrain us more than any other Religious. I saw a table spread and adorned, and knew that it was not the table of poor men who go from door to door." The method of his action proves that he was like that Stranger who was "alone" (see Luke 24:18) in Jerusalem on that day: but yet he made the disciples' hearts burn, while he was speaking.

Chapter 32

Against curiosity in books

62. He taught that the testimony of God rather than value, and edification rather than beauty, should be sought in books. Still, he wished that a few should be kept, and that they should be adapted to the requirements of needy brethren: and so when a certain Minister asked that certain ambitious and very valuable books might be kept by his permission, this was what he heard in reply: "I am not going to lose the book of the Gospel, which I have promised to obey, for the sake of thy books. Do however what thou wilt: my permission shall not be made a snare."

Of Poverty in Beds

Chapter 33

An ensample of the Lord of Ostia. His praise

63. Finally, in couches and beds plenteous poverty so abounded that he who had a few torn rags over some straw deemed it a marriage-bed. Accordingly when a chapter was being held at Saint Maria de Portiuncula, and the Lord of Ostia with a throng of knights and clerks came there to visit the brethren, on seeing how the brethren lay on the ground and noticing their beds, which you might take for the lairs of wild beasts, "Look," said he, before all the company, bitterly weeping, "this is where the brethren sleep!" And he added, "But what will become of us wretches who use up so many superfluities?" All the bystanders were moved even to tears and went away greatly edified. This was that Cardinal of Ostia who when he was at last made the greatest door {ostium) in the Church ever resisted her foes {hostes) until he returned that blessed soul of his as a sacred victim (Justia) to heaven. O pious breast! O bowels of charity! When placed on high he grieved that he had no high merits, when in fact he was loftier in virtue than in station.

Chapter 34

What happened to Saint Francis one night for using a feather-pillow

64. Since we have made mention of beds, another incident occurs to us which it might be profitable to relate. From the time when this Saint turned to Christ, and delivered to forgetfulness the things that are of the world, he would not lie under a coverlet, nor have a feather-pillow at his head. Neither sickness nor strangers' hospitality suspended this restriction. But it happened that at the hermitage of Greccio, when he was suffering more than usual from the infirmity of his eyes, he was compelled, against his will, to use a small pillow. At matins on the first night the Saint called his companion and said to him: "Brother, I have not been able to sleep tonight, nor to remain upright for prayer; my head trembles, my knees sink under me, and my whole body is out of gear, just as if I had eaten

bread made of darnel. I believe the Devil is in this pillow that I have at my head: take it away, for I won't have the Devil at my head any longer." His companion, sympathising with the father's querulous murmur, caught the pillow, which he had thrown at him, to carry it away. So he went out, and immediately lost the power of speech, and was oppressed and bound by such horror that he could neither move his feet from the spot, nor in any wise move his arms. After a little the Saint, who knew what had happened, called him, and he was set free. He came back, and told what he had suffered. And the Saint said to him: "Last evening when I was saying compline I clearly knew that the Devil was coming to the cell". And again, "Very crafty and subtle is our foe, for, when he cannot hurt us in the soul within, at least he gives the body matter for murmuring."

Let those hearken who prepare pillows on every side, so that whichever way they fall they may be caught gently. The Devil gladly follows opulence, he likes to take his stand by costly beds, especially where there is no compulsion of necessity, and the profession forbids such things. None the less does the old serpent fly from a naked man, either because he despises the company of the poor, or because he fears the height of Poverty. If a friar gives heed that a devil lurks in feathers, he will be content to have straw at his head. (The "naked man" is an allusion to a popular belief in the Middle Ages, e.g., in a Provencal summary of Natural History we read that when a viper sees a man naked it dares not look at him for fear, but when it sees him clothed it does not mind him at all and jumps up on him.)

On Ensamples Against Money

Chapter 35

Sharp correction of a brother who touched it with his hand

65. Now that great friend of God, despising all things that are of the world, beyond everything else execrated money. Hence even from the beginning of his conversion he held it in special contempt, and always intimated to his followers that they must fly from it as from the Devil himself. This was the motto he gave them: "Let dung and money be loved and valued alike". One day accordingly a certain layman came into the church of Saint Maria de Portiuncula to pray, and put down near the cross some money for an offering. When he withdrew, one of the brethren simply touched it with his hand and threw it on the window-sill. The Saint heard of what the brother had done: and the brother, seeing that he was found out, ran to beg for pardon, and, falling on the ground, offered to submit to stripes. The Saint rebuked him, and after chiding him most severely for having touched the money bade him remove it in his mouth from the window-sill, and with his mouth lay it on asses' dung outside the precincts: and while that brother gladly obeyed this command, the hearts of all that heard of it were filled with fear. Thenceforth the contempt of all for what had thus been put on the same footing as dung was increased, and they were daily encouraged by fresh examples to despise it.

Chapter 36

Punishment of a brother for picking up money

66. As two brethren were walking together, they came near a lepers' hospital, and rinding some money on the road, they halted, and discussed what should be done with such dung. One of them, laughing at his brother's conscience, wanted to take the money as an offering for leprous servants of Mammon. (*Leprosis pecunicae famulis*. This expression is very curious and difficult. The Rev. P. H. Wicksteed suggests that it may mean servants of the world, i.e., persons outside the "Order," afflicted with leprosy.) His companion

forbade him, saying that he was misled by false piety, and urging upon the rash brother the words of the Rule, whence it is very clear that money found is to be trampled on like dust. The other hardened his mind against the warning (for he was ever habitually stiff-necked), despised the Rule, bent down, and took the money. But he did not escape God's judgment. Immediately he was deprived of speech; he gnashed with his teeth and could frame no words. And so did punishment proclaim the fool, so did retribution teach the arrogant one to obey the father's laws. At last he threw the foul stuff away, and his polluted lips, washed with the waters of penitence, were unloosed in praise.

There is an old proverb, "Correct a fool and he will be a friend".

Chapter 37

A brother chidden who wished to keep money on the plea of necessity

67. Once, when brother Peter Cathanii (the Saint's vicar) saw that Saint Maria de Portiuncula was crowded by brethren from distant parts, and that the alms were not enough to provide them with necessaries, he said to Saint Francis: "I know not, brother, what I am to do, for I have not wherewith to provide sufficiently for the crowd of brethren coming together from every quarter. I pray thee to allow somewhat of the property of novices entering the Order to be reserved, so that recourse may be had to it in time of need." The holy man answered: "Away with such piety, dearest brother, as that of acting impiously against the Rule for the sake of any one whomsoever!" "What am I to do, then?" said the other. "Strip the Virgin's altar," replied Saint Francis, "and take away its various ornaments, since thou canst not help the needy in any other way. Believe me, she will be better pleased to have her Son's Gospel observed and her altar stript, than to have the altar vested and her Son despised. The Lord will send some one to restore to His Mother what He has lent us."

Chapter 38

Of money turned into a snake

68. When the man of God was once passing through Apulia with a

companion he found in the way near Bari a large purse, called in merchants' language *fionda* (a sling), stuffed with coin. The Saint's companion advised him and urgently pressed him to take up the purse, and give the money to the poor; extolling the virtue of pity towards the needy, and praising the mercy which would be shown by spending the money thus. The Saint absolutely refused to do it, declaring that it was a trick of the Devil. "My son," said he, "it is not lawful to take away the property of others; and to give away what belongs to others involves punishment for sin, not honour for merit." So they left the spot and hastened to finish their journey. However, that brother, deluded by a vain compassion, was not satisfied; and continued to suggest transgression. The Saint consented to return to the place, not indeed to comply with the brother's wish, but to show to the fool a Divine mystery. He called a lad who was sitting on a well by the way, that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses" the Sacrament of the Trinity (i.e., the working of the Triune God) might be manifest. So the three came back to the purse and saw it stuffed with coins. The Saint forbad either of the others to come near, in order that the Devil's deceit might be disclosed by the power of prayer: and then he withdrew about a stone's cast and applied himself to holy prayer. On his return from prayer he bade the brother take up the purse (which, through his prayer, contained a snake instead of money). The brother trembled and was amazed, and already, feeling some foreboding, his thoughts were changed from what they had been before. At last he drove away his hesitation of heart by the fear of holy obedience and took the purse in his hands; when lo! a large serpent leapt out of the purse and showed that brother how the Devil had deceived him. Then said the Saint to him: "To God's servants, brother, money is nothing else but a devil and a venomous snake°.

Chapter 39

Of poverty in dress

69. This man, "endued with power from on high," was rather warmed inwardly by the Divine fire, than outwardly by the bodily covering. He execrated those in the Order who wore three garments and used soft clothing except of necessity. He declared that when pleasure and not reason was the index of necessity, it was the sign

of a quenched spirit. "For," said he, "when the spirit is lukewarm and gradually growing cold in grace, the flesh and blood must needs seek their own. For when the soul finds no delight (he said), what remains but that the flesh should turn to its own delight? And then the animal appetite puts forward the palliation of necessity; then the feelings of the flesh fashion the conscience." And he would add, "Suppose our brother is truly in need, suppose he feels any want; if he hastens to satisfy himself, and to put the need far from him, what reward shall he receive? He had an opportunity of deserving well, but deliberately proved that he did not like to profit by it." With these and the like words would he pierce those who were unfamiliar with necessities: since not to endure them patiently is nothing else but to turn back to Egypt.

In short, on no occasion would he let the brethren have more than two tunics, which however he allowed them to patch with pieces sewn on. He bade them have a horror of choice clothing, and those who were disobedient in this matter he most sternly reprimanded before all. In order to confound such by his own example he sewed sackcloth over his own coarse tunic: and even at his death asked that his funeral tunic should be covered with common sackcloth. But he allowed the brethren under stress of sickness or other need a soft tunic next the skin, provided that the habit preserved its roughness and coarseness outside. For he would say: "Rigour shall yet be so relaxed, lukewarmness shall yet so prevail that the sons of the poor father will not be at all ashamed to wear even scarlet array, changing the colour only".

We thy alien children do not belie thee herein, O father, but our iniquity rather belies itself, for lo! it is now clearer than the light and is increasing day by day.

Chapter 40

He pronounces that those who withdraw from Poverty must needs be punished

70. Sometimes also he would repeat these words: "In proportion as the brethren shall decline from poverty the world shall decline from them, and they shall seek, but shall not find; but if they embrace my Lady Poverty the world shall nourish them, because they have

been given to the world for salvation". And again: "There are mutual obligations between the world and the brethren; they owe to the world a good example, the world owes them the provision of necessaries. When they belie their faith, and cease to give a good example, the world, by a just judgment, draws back its hand from them." In his care for Poverty the man of God feared a multitude; for appearance, even though not fact, points it out as rich. Wherefore he used to say: "O that it might come to pass that the world, beholding the Lesser Brethren very rarely, should wonder at their fewness!" And so, bound to the Lady Poverty by an indissoluble tie, he looked for her dowry not in the present but in the future. Those psalms which refer to poverty - for instance, "The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever," and "Let the poor see and be glad" - he used to chant with more fervent affection and more gladsome rejoicing.

On Alms-giving

Chapter 41

Of his commendation of alms-seeking

71. The holy father made use of alms gathered from door to door much more willingly than of such as had been offered. He declared that to be ashamed of begging was hostile to salvation, but affirmed that that shame in begging which does not draw back the foot was holy. He praised the blush rising in a modest forehead, but not the being confounded by fear. Sometimes in exhorting his disciples to seek alms he used these words: "Go, for at this latest hour the Lesser Brethren have been lent to the world in order that the elect may fulfil in them that which shall bring them this commendation from the Judge: 'That which ye have done to one of My Lesser Brethren ye have done to Me'." And accordingly he said that the Order had been privileged by the great Prophet who had so clearly expressed the title of its name. And therefore he wished the brethren to dwell not only in towns but in hermitages, in order that all might have whereof to deserve well, and that the reprobate might be stript of the veil of excuse.

Chapter 42

An ensample of the Saint in alms-seeking

72. That he might not even once offend his holy spouse, the servant of the Most High used to act thus: If ever, when invited to eat by great lords, he was to be honoured by a lavish table, he would first seek for scraps of bread among the neighbouring houses, and then, enriched thus by want, he hastened to sit down to meat. Sometimes, when he was asked why he did this, he answered that he would not relinquish an enduring inheritance for a fief granted for an hour. "It is Poverty," said he, "that appoints the heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, and not your false riches."

Chapter 43

The example which he set in the Court of the Lord of Ostia; and of his

answer to that bishop

73. Once when Saint Francis was visiting Pope Gregory of revered memory (at that time holding a lesser office) and the dinner-hour was at hand, he went for alms, and when he came back he laid some scraps of black bread on the bishop's table. At this sight the bishop was a little ashamed, especially on account of the newly invited guests. But the father with glad countenance distributed the alms he had received to the knights and chaplains at table, all of whom accepted them with wondrous devotion: some ate them, others out of reverence kept them, and when dinner was over the bishop rose, took the man of God within, raised his arms and embraced him, saying, "My brother, why hast thou put me to shame in the house which is thine and thy brethren's, by going for alms?" - "I have rather shown you honour," replied the Saint, "since I have honoured a greater Lord; for God is well-pleased with poverty and with that especially which is voluntary begging. For I have a royal dignity and a pre-eminent nobility - to follow that Lord, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor." And he added, "A poor table furnished with scanty alms delights me more than great tables loaded with almost countless dishes". Then the bishop, much edified, said to the Saint, "My son, do what is good in thine eyes; for the Lord is with thee".

Chapter 44

His exhortation, both by example and precept, to alms-seeking

74. Sometimes at first he would discipline himself and spare the brethren's bashfulness by going about alone for alms; but when he saw that several brethren were not giving due heed to their calling he once said, "Dearest brethren, the Son of God Who for our sake made Himself poor in this world was nobler than we. We have for His sake chosen the way of poverty, and ought not to be ashamed to go for alms. It is by no means meet for the heirs of the kingdom to blush for the earnest of their heavenly inheritance. I tell you that many noble and wise men are to join our company, who will think it an honour to beg for alms. Do you, therefore, who are the first-fruits of them, be glad and rejoice, and refuse not to do what you are handing down for those holy men to do."

Chapter 45

Rebuke of a brother refusing to beg

75. Blessed Francis often used to say that a true Lesser Brother ought not to remain long without going for alms. "And the nobler my son is," said he, "the readier let him be to go, for in suchwise merits are heaping up for him."

There was in a certain "place" a brother who was a cipher at begging, but at table a number: and the Saint, observing that he was a friend of the belly and an unworking sharer in the fruits, once addressed him thus: "Go thy way, brother fly, for thou wouldst eat the sweat of thy brethren and be idle in God's work. Thou art like brother drone who though he endures not the toil of the bees wants to be the first to eat the honey." That carnal man, perceiving that his gluttony had been found out, went back to the world which he had not yet forsaken: for he quitted the Religion: and the "cipher at begging" was now no brother, and he who had been "a number at table" became a manifold devil.

Chapter 46

How he kissed the shoulder of a brother whom he met carrying alms

76. Another time, at Portiuncula, a brother returning with alms from Assisi began when he was now near the "place" to break forth into song, and to praise the Lord with a loud voice. On hearing this the Saint suddenly jumped up, ran out, kissed the brother's shoulder, and said, taking the wallet on his own shoulder, "Blessed be my brother who goes readily, seeks humbly, and returns rejoicing".

Chapter 47

How he induced some secular knights to seek alms

77. When blessed Francis, full of infirmities and now drawing near to his end, was at the "place" at Nocera, the people of Assisi sent messengers, formally appointed, to demand delivery of his person; that they might not, as touching the man of God's body, "give their

glory to another". And as the knights were reverently bringing him home on horseback they came to a very poor village called Satriano; where, as hunger and the time of day called for food, they went about, but finding nothing for sale, came back to blessed Francis saying, "Thou must give us of thine alms, for here we can buy nothing". The Saint replied, "You find not because you trust more in your flies than in God. (Now he called pieces of money 'flies'.) But go again round the houses you have visited, and humbly ask for alms, tendering the love of God instead of money. Be not ashamed, for, after sin, all things are given us as alms, and the great Almsgiver is in His loving-kindness bountiful to the worthy and to the unworthy." The knights put shame aside, readily asked for alms and bought more for the love of God than they had for money; for all vied in giving to them gladly, nor had hunger any power where opulent poverty prevailed.

Chapter 48

Of a piece of capon turned into a fish at Alexandria

78. In almsgiving he looked to the gain of souls A rather than to the sustenance of the flesh, and in giving no less than in receiving he made himself an example to others. Thus when he once came to Alexandria in Lombardy to preach God's word he was respectfully entertained by a God-fearing man of good report. His host asked him to observe the Holy Gospel by eating all that was set before him, and he graciously agreed to do so, being conquered by the devotion of his host, who ran in haste to prepare a capon seven years old (sic) on purpose for the man of God to eat. While the Patriarch of the Poor was sitting at table with the rejoicing household, straightway there appeared at the door a son of Belial, poor in all grace, and feigning poverty in necessary things. He craftily urged the love of God as he asked for alms, and with a lamentable voice craved assistance for God's sake. The Saint acknowledged that Name blessed above all things and sweeter to him than honey; and most thankfully took up a piece of the bird which had been served up, put it on some bread and sent it to the beggar. To be brief, that wretch kept the gift in order to bring reproach on the Saint.

79. Next morning the Saint, as he was wont, preached God's word

to the assembled people. Forthwith that wicked man began to bluster and tried to show the piece of capon to every one. "See," he yelled, "what kind of man this Francis is who is preaching, whom you honour as a Saint! Look at all the meat he gave me while he was eating last night!" All the people cried out against the wretch and upbraided him as being filled with the Devil: but what he was trying to persuade them to be a piece of capon appeared in fact to all to be a fish, and the wretched man himself, abashed by the miracle, was forced to admit what every one else asserted. At length he blushed for shame, and atoned by penitence for the detected misdeed. He begged the Saint's pardon before them all, confessing the wicked intention he had had; and the meat returned to its own species, after the transgressor had returned to his right mind.

Of Those That Renounce the World

Chapter 49

Ensample of one whom the Saint rebuked for distributing his property to his relations and not to the poor

80. The Saint taught those coming to the Order previously to give a bill of divorcement to the world, by first offering outwardly their goods, and then inwardly themselves to God. He admitted to the Order none but those who had expropriated themselves and were keeping back nothing at all; both because of the word of the Holy Gospel and lest they should cause scandal by retaining a treasure-chest.

81. It happened that after the Saint had been preaching in the March of Ancona, a man came to him humbly begging for admission to the Order. "If thou wilt be joined to the poor of God," said the Saint to him, "first distribute thy goods to the poor of the world." On hearing this the man went, and being led by carnal love, gave his goods to his relations and nothing to the poor. When he came back and told the Saint of that bounteous munificence, the father laughed at him and said, "Go thy way, brother fly, for thou hast not yet come out from thy house and kindred. Thou hast given thy goods to thy kindred, and hast defrauded the poor: thou art not worthy to live with the holy poor: thou hast begun with the flesh and laid an unsound foundation for a spiritual building." This brutish man went back to his relations and recovered his goods, relinquishing his virtuous purpose the more quickly because he would not relinquish his goods to the poor.

Such a pitiful distribution [as that man made] deludes many nowadays who seek to attain the life of bliss by a worldly beginning. For no one consecrates himself to God in order to enrich his kinsfolk, but in order to gain life by the fruit of good work, redeeming his sins by the price of compassion.

Saint Francis often also taught the brethren if they were in want to have recourse to strangers rather than to those entering the Order,

first for example's sake, and next to avoid all appearance of base advantage.

Chapter 50

Of a vision relating to Poverty

82. It pleases me here to relate a vision of the Saint which is worthy of record. One night at the end of long prayer he at last gradually fell asleep. That holy soul was brought into the sanctuary of God, and in a dream he saw among other things a Lady who was of this fashion: Her head appeared of gold, her bosom and arms of silver, her belly of crystal, and the parts thence downward of iron. She was of lofty stature, and her frame was subtly and symmetrically compacted by rule. But this Lady of noble form was covered by a foul mantle. When he arose in the morning the blessed father rehearsed the vision to the holy man brother Pacifico, but did not declare its meaning. Though many have expounded it at their pleasure I think it not unadvisable to keep to the interpretation of the said Pacifico, which the Holy Ghost suggested to him as he heard it. "This Lady of noble form" (he said) "is the beauteous soul of Saint Francis. The golden head is contemplation of things eternal and wisdom therein: the silver bosom and arms are the utterances of the Lord pondered in the heart and fulfilled in action: the crystal by its hardness indicates sobriety and by its brightness chastity: the iron is stedfast perseverance; but take the foul mantle to be the frail despised body wherewith the precious soul is covered." Many, however, [also] having the spirit of God, understand by this Lady, Poverty, as being the father's bride. The reward of glory (they say) made her golden, the heralding of fame made her of silver; the profession, one outwardly and inwardly and void of treasure-chests, made her crystalline; and final perseverance made her of iron; but for this illustrious Lady the judgment of brutish men wove a foul mantle. Many adapt this oracle to the Religion, following Daniel in tracing a succession of periods.

But that the vision refers to the father is especially clear from the fact that he himself, avoiding arrogance, absolutely refused to expound it: and surely if it had dropped down in reference to the Order he would not have passed it by in dumb silence.

Of Saint Francis' Compassion for the Poor

Chapter 51

Of the compassion he had for the poor and how he envied those poorer than himself

83. What tongue can tell how great was this man's compassion for the poor? He had an inborn kindness which was doubled by the tenderness poured from on high. Wherefore the spirit of Francis melted towards the poor; and to whom he could not give help he gave affection. Whatever want, whatever penury he saw in any one his mind swiftly referred it back to Christ. So in all the poor he read the Son of the poor Lady; bearing naked in his heart Him whom she bore naked in her hands. But whereas he had banished from himself all other envy, from the envy of poverty alone he could not free himself. If ever he saw one poorer than himself he envied that man forthwith and feared to be outdone by him in the contest for poverty.

84. One day when the man of God was going about preaching he chanced to meet a poor man by the way; and, seeing that the man was naked he turned to his companion with compunction, saying: "This man's want does us great shame, and severely rebukes our poverty". "How so, brother?" answered his companion. Then the Saint answered with a lamentable voice: "I chose Poverty for my riches, and for my Lady, and see! she shines more brightly in yonder man. Knowest thou not that the sound has gone out through all the world that we for Christ's sake are the poorest of men? But yonder poor man proves that the case is otherwise." O envy to be envied! O emulation to be emulated by his sons! This is not that emulation which is grieved at the good things of others, not that which is darkened by the sun's rays, not that which is opposed to tenderness, not that which is tortured by spite. Thinkest thou that Gospel poverty has not something to be envied? She has Christ, and through Him has all in all. Why pantest thou for revenues, thou clerk of today? Tomorrow thou wilt know that Francis was rich, when thou shalt find in thy hand the revenues of torments.

Chapter 52

How he punished a brother for speaking evil of a poor man!

85. Another day when he was preaching, a poor sick man came to the "place". Pitying the man's double misfortune, namely, want and illness, he began to discourse on poverty with his companion. And when, suffering with the sufferer, Saint Francis had already entered into the feeling of his heart, the Saint's companion said: "Brother, it is true the man is poor, but perchance in all the province there is no one richer, in will, than he". The Saint rebuked him at once and said to him as he owned his guilt: "Make haste, put off thy tunic, fall down at the poor man's feet, and proclaim thyself guilty. And not only beg his pardon, but ask him to pray for thee." He obeyed, went to offer satisfaction, and returned. Then the Saint said to him: "Whenever thou seest a poor man, brother, a mirror of the Lord and of His poor Mother is set before thee. Likewise in the sick, consider the sicknesses He took on Himself for us."

Ah, there was ever a bundle of myrrh by Francis, he ever was looking on the face of his Christ, ever handling the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with infirmities".

Chapter 53

Of the cloak given to an old woman at Celano

86. It happened at Celano in winter-time that Saint Francis was wearing a cloth folded like a cloak, which a friend of the brethren, a man of Tivoli, had lent him; and when he was in the palace of the Bishop of Marsica he met an old woman asking alms. Immediately he unfastened the cloth from his neck, and though it did not belong to him, gave it to the poor old woman, saying: "Go and make thyself a gown, for thou art in sore need of one". The old woman smiled, being overcome either by shyness or joy, took the cloth from his hands, hurried off, and, fearing that it might be asked for again if she delayed, cut it up with her scissors. But finding that the cloth she had cut would not be enough for a gown, she was encouraged by his former kindness to go back to the holy man and point out that there was too little cloth. He looked round at his companion, who had just such another cloth on his back, and said: "Hearest

thou, brother, what this poor woman is saying? Let us bear the cold for the love of God, and do thou give her cloth to finish her gown with." Whereupon his companion gave, even as he had given, and both remained naked that the old woman might be clothed.

Chapter 54

How he gave a cloak to another poor person

87. Another time, when Saint Francis was returning from Siena, he met a poor man, and said to his companion: "Brother, we must give this cloak back to the poor man to whom it belongs, for we have borrowed it until we should happen to meet some one poorer than ourselves". His companion, bearing in mind the tender father's necessity, persisted in opposing him, so that he might not provide for another by neglecting himself. But the holy man said: "I will not be a thief; it would be reckoned to us as theft if we gave not to one in greater need". So the other said no more, and Saint Francis handed the cloak [to the stranger].

Chapter 55

How he did the like for another poor person

88. The like thing occurred at Cella di Cortona. Blessed Francis was wearing a new cloak that the brethren had got on purpose for him. A poor man came to the "place" lamenting aloud that his wife was dead and his poor family left desolate. The Saint said to him: "I give thee this cloak for the love of God, on condition that thou give it up to no one unless he pay thee well for it". The brethren forthwith came running in order to take the cloak away and prevent the gift from being made. But the poor man, emboldened by the holy father's look, clutched the cloak with both hands to defend it, as being his own. Finally the brethren redeemed the cloak (i.e., they induced some one else to pay for it) and the poor man went off with the price.

Chapter 56

How by the gift of a cloak he induced a man to cease from hating his lord

89. At Colle, in the territory of Perugia, Saint Francis once found a poor man whom he had known in former days in the world, and said to him: "Brother, how art thou?" But the other began angrily to heap curses on his lord, who had taken away all his goods, saying: "Thanks to my lord, whom the Lord Almighty curse, I am but in a bad way". Saint Francis, pitying him in soul more than in body, because he was persisting in mortal hatred, said to him: "Brother, forgive thy lord for the love of God, that thou mayest deliver thy soul, and it may be that he will restore thee what he has taken. Otherwise, having lost thy property, thou wilt lose thy soul as well." "I cannot forgive him entirely," said the man, "unless he first restore what he has taken away." Then Saint Francis, having a cloak on his back, said: "See, I give thee this cloak, and I entreat thee for the love of the Lord God to forgive thy lord". Forthwith the man's heart was softened, and, moved by this act of kindness, he took the gift and forgave the wrongs he had suffered.

Chapter 57

How he gave a poor man the border of his tunic

90. Once when a poor man begged of him and he had nothing in his hands, he unsewed the border of his own tunic and gave it to the poor man. Sometimes also in the like necessity he took off his drawers. Such was the abundance of his compassion toward the poor, such the earnestness with which he followed the footsteps of Christ the poor man.

Chapter 58

How he caused the first New Testament that was in the Order to be given to the poor mother of two of the brethren

91. The mother of two of the brethren once came to the Saint and confidently asked for alms. The holy father, sharing her distress, said to his vicar, brother Peter Cathanii, "Can we give any alms to our mother?" (For he called the mother of any brother the mother of himself and of all the brethren.) Brother Peter answered, "There is nothing left in the house that might be given her," adding, "We have one New Testament out of which, for want of a breviary, we read the lessons at matins". "Give our mother the New Testament,"

said blessed Francis, "that she may sell it for her need, because by it we are admonished to succour the poor. For my part I believe that the gift of it will be more pleasing than the reading out of it." And so the book was given to the woman, and the first Testament there was in the Order was parted with through this sacred compassion.

Chapter 59

How he gave a cloak to a poor woman suffering from her eyes

92. At the time when Saint Francis was staying at the Bishop of Rieti's palace for the cure of a disease of the eyes a poor woman from Machilone, suffering also from the like disease, came to the physician. The Saint, therefore, turned to his warden and addressed him familiarly somewhat as follows: "Brother warden, we must restore the property of another". "Let it be restored, father," he answered, "if there is any such thing with us." "That cloak," said Saint Francis, "which we have borrowed from the poor woman yonder let us restore to her, for she has nothing in her purse for her expenses." The warden replied, "Brother, the cloak is mine and has not been lent us by any one. Use it as long as thou pleasest; when thou wilt not use it any more, give it back to me." (Now the warden had bought it a little while before for Saint Francis' need.) The Saint said to him: "Brother warden, thou hast ever been courteous to me; I pray thee show [me] courtesy now." "Do as thou wilt, father," answered the warden, "whatsoever the spirit doth prompt thee." So [Saint Francis] called a certain very devout layman and said to him: "Take this cloak and twelve loaves, and go and say to yonder poor woman: 'The poor man to whom thou lentest the cloak thanks thee for the loan: but now take what is thine own'". The man went and did as he had been told. The woman, thinking it was in joke, said with shame: "Oh, don't bother me with thy cloak; I don't know what thou art talking about". But he insisted and put all into her hands. When she saw that there was indeed no deception, fearing lest what had been so easily gained might be taken away from her, she rose up by night, and, heedless of the cure of her eyes, carried the cloak home with her.

Chapter 60

How three women appeared to him in the way and vanished after giving

him a new greeting

93. I will briefly relate a wondrous thing, of A doubtful interpretation, but most certain truth. When Francis, Christ's poor man, was hastening from Rieti to Siena for the cure of his eyes, he passed over a plain near Rocca di Campiglio, accompanied by a certain physician who was attached to the Order. And lo! three poor women appeared by the wayside as Saint Francis was passing. They were so much alike in stature, age and countenance that you might suppose that threefold matter had been perfected by one form. And as Saint Francis came up they reverently bowed their heads and extolled him by a new greeting, saying: "Welcome, Lady Poverty!" Forthwith the Saint was filled with joy unspeakable, for there was nothing in him that he would so gladly have men salute as that which those women had fixed on. And at first, thinking that they really were poor women, he turned to the doctor who accompanied him, and said: "I pray thee, for God's sake, give, so that I may give something to these poor women". The doctor quickly took out money, and leaping from his horse, gave some coins to each one. So they went on a little further on their way, and then the brethren and the doctor looked round, and saw that all that plaint was void of women. Greatly amazed, they reckoned the occurrence among the wonders of God, knowing that those were not women who had flown away more swiftly than birds.

Of His Zeal in Prayer

Chapter 61

Of his time and place of prayer and of his earnestness in prayer

94. Francis, the man of God, though absent in A body from the Lord, strove to make his spirit present in heaven, and having already become a fellow-citizen of the angels, was separated from them by the wall of the flesh only. His whole soul thirsted for his Christ, to Whom he devoted not only his whole heart, but his whole body.

We relate, as we have seen with our eyes (so far as it is possible to convey them to human ears), a few of his achievements in prayer, for posterity to copy. Of his whole time he made a holy leisure wherein to write wisdom on his heart, for fear that unless he were continually advancing, he might seem to be falling short. If invaded by visits from lay-folk, or by any business, he would cut them short unfinished, and go back to his inward musings. The world had no savour for him who was fed with heavenly sweetness, and Divine delights made him revolt from the gross concerns of men. He always sought out a hidden place wherein he might make not only his spirit but his every member fit for his God. When in public he felt himself suddenly visited by the Lord, in order that he might not lack a cell, he made a little cell of his cloak: and sometimes if he had no cloak, he covered his face with his sleeve, that he might not disclose the hidden manna. He always put something between him and the bystanders, lest they should be aware of the Bridegroom's touch, so that he might pray unseen [even] when at close quarters with many on ship-board. Finally, when he could do none of these things, he made a temple of his breast. There was no spitting nor groaning, for he was unconscious of self; no hard breathing nor outward motions, for he was absorbed in God.

95. Such was his behaviour in inhabited places, but when praying in the woods and in solitary places he would fill the grove with sighs, water the ground with tears, smite his breast with his hands, and having there discovered, as it were, a secret hiding-place, he

would often speak with his Lord in words. There he would make answer to his Judge, there entreat his Father; there he would converse with his Friend, there rejoice with the Bridegroom. And in order that he might make of the whole marrow of his being a whole burnt-offering in manifold ways, he would set before his eyes in manifold ways Him who is supremely simple. Often with lips unmoved he would ruminate within, and, drawing outward things inward, would uplift his spirit on high. And so the whole man, not so much praying, as having become a [living] prayer, concentrated his whole attention and affection on the one thing which he was seeking from the Lord. With what sweetness, think you, was he encompassed as he became accustomed to such intercourse? He knows: for I can but wonder. Knowledge will be given to him who has experience: it is not granted to those that have none. So, boiling in fervour of spirit, piercing in utterance, his aspect and his whole soul liquefied, he was even now abiding in the supreme commonwealth of the heavenly kingdom.

The blessed father was wont never to pass over negligently any visitation of the Spirit; but when it was offered, he followed it up, and, so long as the Lord permitted, he enjoyed the sweetness thus offered. If therefore while he was being pressed by any business, or was on a journey he gradually became aware of the touch of grace, he would taste that sweetest manna by frequent snatches here and there. For as he was on his way he would allow his companions to go on ahead and himself stand still; and so, converting the new inspiration into enjoyment, he received not the grace in vain.

Chapter 62

Of his devout recitation of the canonical Hours

96. He recited the canonical Hours with no less reverence than devotion. For though suffering from disease of the eyes, stomach, spleen and liver, he would never, when chanting the Psalms, lean against a wall or door-post, but always said the Hours upright and bare-headed, without letting his eyes wander, and without interruption. When going on foot through the world, he always stood still to say the Hours, and when riding, he dismounted. Thus one day when he was returning from Rome and it was raining incessantly, he dismounted from his horse to say the Office, and, as

he stayed some time, he was wet through. For he used sometimes to say, "If the body eats its food in quiet, which food together with itself will become meat for worms, with what great peace and tranquillity ought the soul to take its food, which is its God?"

Chapter 63

How at prayer he drove away wandering thoughts

97. He deemed himself grievously to offend if at any time he were moved by vain fancies when at prayer. If any such thing happened he never failed to atone for it by immediate confession, and his zeal herein had become so much a matter of use that he was very seldom troubled by flies of this sort. One Lent he had spent his odds and ends of time (that they might not be altogether lost) in making a certain vessel. One day while he was devoutly saying Tierce his eyes chanced to turn to look at the vessel, and he felt that the fervour of his inner man was checked. Grieving, therefore, that the cry from his heart to the Divine ears had been interrupted, when Tierce was finished he said in the hearing of the brethren: "Alas for the fruitless work which has had the power to turn away my mind to it! I will sacrifice it to the Lord, whose sacrifice it has hindered." And with these words he seized the vessel and burnt it up. "Let us be ashamed," said he, "to be seized by trivial fancies when we are speaking to the Great King at the time of prayer."

Chapter 64

Of his mental extasy

98. Many a time he was caught up out of himself, and hung in such rapture of contemplation that he could disclose to none that which he experienced, transcending human sense: an instance, however, which once became known, makes clear to us how often he was absorbed in the celestial sweetness. He was riding on an ass at a time when he must needs pass through Borgo Saint Sepolcro, and as he intended to rest at a certain lepers' house, it became known to many that the man of God was to pass by. Men and women flocked from all sides to see him, desiring with their wonted devotion to touch him. What then? They handled him, they pulled him along, and cut off little bits from his tunic to put away. He seemed

insensible to it all, and heeded what was going on as little as a corpse. At length he and his company reached their destination, and having long since left Borgo Saint Sepolcro, the contemplator of heavenly things (as though coming back from elsewhere) anxiously inquired when they would be getting near Borgo?

Chapter 65

His behaviour after prayer

99. When he came back from his private devotions (which changed him almost into another man) he strove his hardest to seem like other people, for fear that the gale of [human] favour might cause him to lose what he had gained, if his fervour showed itself. Moreover he often spoke thus to his familiar friends: "When a servant of God is visited at prayer by the Lord with some fresh consolation, he ought, before coming forth from prayer, to raise his eyes to heaven, and, clasping his hands, to say to God: 'O Lord, Thou hast sent this consolation and sweetness from heaven to me, an unworthy sinner, and I restore it to Thee that Thou mayest keep it for me, for that I am a robber of Thy treasure'. And again: 'Lord, take from me Thy good in this world, that Thou mayest keep it for me hereafter'. Such should be his language, in order that when he comes forth from prayer he may bear himself toward others as much after the manner of a poor sinner as if he had gained no fresh grace." He would also say: "For the sake of a trifling reward one may lose a priceless thing, and may easily provoke the giver not to repeat his gift". Finally it was his custom to rise for prayer so stealthily and gently that none of his companions noticed either that he was rising or that he was praying. But when late at night he went to bed he made a noise and almost a din, so that his going to rest might be heard by all.

Chapter 66

How a bishop who came upon him in prayer was deprived of speech

100. While Saint Francis was praying one day at the "place" of Portiuncula the Bishop of Assisi happened to come to pay him a friendly visit, as he was in the habit of doing. As soon as he entered the "place" he went without ceremony to the Saint's ceil, not having

been summoned, knocked at the door and was about to go in. And behold, as he was putting his head inside, and perceived the Saint praying, immediately a trembling seized him, his limbs stiffened and he even became speechless. Suddenly by the will of God he was forcibly driven out and led backward for some distance. I believe either that the bishop was unworthy to behold that secret thing or else that the Saint was worthy of retaining still longer that which he had. The bishop, abashed, returned to the brethren, and on opening his mouth to confess his fault he recovered his speech.

Chapter 67

How an abbot felt the power of Saint Francis' prayer

101. Another time the abbot of the monastery of Saint Giustino, in the diocese of Perugia, happened to meet Saint Francis. Dismounting quickly from his horse, the abbot talked with Saint Francis for a short time concerning his soul's health, and then, as he was going away, humbly begged Saint Francis to pray for him. "I will gladly pray for thee, my lord," answered Saint Francis. So when the abbot had gone a little distance away from Saint Francis, the Saint said to his companion: "Wait a little, brother, for I wish to pay the debt which I have promised to discharge". (For his custom always was when asked to pray for any one not to put the matter aside, but to perform such a promise quickly.) And so, as the Saint was praying to God, suddenly the abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted warmth and a sweetness he had never experienced before, so that he seemed quite carried out of himself in rapture of mind. He stood still for a little while, and then, coming to himself again, he knew the power of holy Francis' prayer. Thenceforth therefore he ever glowed with greater love toward the Order, and related the fact to many as a miracle.

Meet it is that God's servants should give one another such gifts; and such communion between them in giving and receiving is fitting. That holy love which is sometimes termed "special" is content with the fruit of prayer; charity makes little account of earthly gifts. To help and to be helped in the spiritual warfare, to commend and to be commended before Christ's tribunal, this I believe to be the characteristic of holy love. But to what a height do you suppose that man rose in prayer to be able thus to raise up

another by his merits?

Of His Understanding in Holy Scripture and of the Power of His Words

Chapter 68

102. Though this blessed man had not been nurtured in any learned studies, yet being a learner, from God, of the "wisdom which is from above," and being illuminated by the brightness of the eternal light, he had no mean knowledge of the Scriptures. For his genius, pure from all taint, pierced through hidden mysteries, and the lover's affection entered within, whereas the knowledge of masters remains without. He would sometimes read the sacred books; and what he had once put into his mind he wrote indelibly on his heart. Memory supplied the place of books; for if he heard a thing once it was not in vain, because his affection ruminated it with continual devotion. This, he said, was the fruitful way to learn and read; not to wander through a thousand treatises. He held him for a true philosopher who should put nothing before the longing for eternal life: and he would say that a humble and not presumptuous inquirer applying himself to Scripture would easily attain from the knowledge of himself to the knowledge of God. He often unravelled difficult questions, and, though unskilled in words, made his understanding and power abundantly manifest.

Chapter 69

Of the prophetic utterance which he expounded at the request of a friar Preacher

103. While he was staying at Siena, one of the Order of Preachers, a spiritual man and a doctor of divinity, chanced to come there. So he visited Saint Francis, and the expert and the Saint enjoyed for a long time the sweetest talk about God's word. And the divine questioned Francis concerning Ezekiel's saying, "If thou proclaim not to the wicked man his wickedness, I will require his soul at thy hand," (Ezekiel 3:18) and he said: "I myself, good father, know many who to my knowledge are in mortal sin, but I do not always proclaim their wickedness to them. Will their souls, then, be required at my hand?" But when blessed Francis humbly said that

he was unlearned, and that it were more expedient for him to be taught by the other than to interpret the meaning of Scripture, that humble doctor added: "Brother, though I have heard this saying expounded by several wise men, I should be glad to know how thou understandest it". Then blessed Francis said: M If the passage is of general application, I take it to mean that the servant of God ought in life and holiness so to burn within himself as to reprove all the wicked by the light of his example and the tongue of his conversation. So, I say, the brightness of his life and the perfume of his fame will; proclaim to all their wickedness." Therefore the divine, greatly edified, said to the companions of the blessed Francis as he went away: "My brethren, this man's theology, based on purity and contemplation, is a soaring eagle, while our learning crawls with its belly on the ground".

Chapter 70

Of the things he expounded when questioned by a certain Cardinal

104. Another time when he was at Rome in a certain Cardinal's house, he was questioned on some obscure passages, and brought deep things to light in such wise that you might think he had ever dwelt with the Scriptures. And the lord Cardinal said to him: "I do not question thee as being a lettered man, but as one who has the Spirit of God; and I gladly accept thy interpretation, because I know that it proceeds from God alone".

Chapter 71

What he said he knew in answer to a brother who exhorted him to apply himself to reading

105. When he was ill and oppressed by pain everywhere his companion once said to him: "Father, thou hast ever fled for refuge to the Scriptures, they have ever furnished remedies for thy pains: I pray thee now also to have something read to thee from the Prophets, and perhaps thy spirit will rejoice in the Lord". The Saint replied: "It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture, it is good to seek out our Lord God in them; but for myself, I have already mastered so much of the Scriptures that I have an ample store for meditation and reflection. I need no more, my son: I know Christ,

the poor man crucified."

Chapter 72

Of the swords which brother Pacifico saw glittering in the Saint's mouth

106. There was in the March of Ancona a certain layman forgetful of himself and ignorant of God, who had altogether sold himself to vanity. He was known as "the King of Verses," because he was the chief of those who sang of wantonness, and a composer of worldly songs. To be brief, worldly glory had raised him up so high, that he had been crowned with great pomp by the Emperor. So while thus walking in darkness he was "drawing iniquity with cords of vanity," the Divine Compassion pitied the wretched man and determined to call him back, that the outcast might not perish. By God's providence blessed Francis and he met at a certain monastery of poor nuns. The blessed father, with his companions, had come thither with his brethren to see his spiritual daughters, the layman, with many boon-companions, to see a kinswoman of his. And the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he beheld with his bodily eyes Saint Francis signed as with a cross with two glittering swords, one of which went from his head to his feet, the other across his breast from one hand to the other. (He did not know blessed Francis before, but when he was indicated by so great a miracle, recognised him immediately.) Abashed at the sight, he began to purpose better things - at least, in the distant future. But the blessed father, after first preaching to all generally, turned the sword of God's word against this man, for he took him aside and admonished him gently concerning the vanity of the age and contempt of the world, and then pierced his heart by the threat of God's judgments. He answered forthwith: "What need is there for more words? Let us come to deeds. Take me away from men, and restore me to the great Emperor." Next day the Saint vested him, and named him brother "Pacifico," for that he had been brought back to the peace of God. And by how much the greater had been the crowd of his vain companions, by so much the more numerous were they who were edified by his conversion. Brother Pacifico, rejoicing in the company of the blessed father, began to perceive unctions he had never perceived before: for he was allowed a second time to see what was veiled from others, inasmuch as not long afterwards he

beheld on blessed Francis' forehead a great sign Tau (the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the old form of which was a cross; see Ezekiel 9:4 (Vulgate)) which with variegated circles displayed the beauty of the peacock.

Chapter 73

Of the efficacy of his sermons and ot the testimony which a certain natural philosopher bore to it

107. Now although the evangelist Francis preached to the unlearned in homely and unlearned language, knowing as he did that power is more needed than words, yet among spiritual men and those of greater capacity his utterances were life-giving and profound. He would hint in a few words at what was unspeakable, and mingling ardent gestures and movements with his words, transported his hearers wholly to heavenly things. He made no use of the keys of distinctions, because he did not lay out in order discourses which were not of his own inventing. Christ, the true Power and Wisdom, gave to his voice the voice of power. A natural philosopher, a learned and eloquent man, once said: "Whereas I can remember every word of the sermons of others, the words uttered by holy Francis alone escape me: and if I commit any of them to memory they do not seem to me the same that dropped from his lips before".

Chapter 74

How by the power of his word he, through brother Sylvester, drove devils out of Arezzo

108. Not only were Francis' words effectual in his presence but sometimes when transmitted through others they did not return in vain. Accordingly he happened once to come to Arezzo at a time when that whole city was so shaken with intestinal war that its destruction seemed imminent. The man of God therefore lodged outside the city in a suburb, and beheld devils exulting over it and inflaming the citizens to their mutual destruction. So he called a brother, Sylvester by name, a godly man of worthy simplicity, and commanded him thus: "Go before the gate of the city, and on behalf of Almighty God command the devils to go out of it as speedily as

possible". The simple and dutiful brother hastened to obey, and, bespeaking the favour of the Lord by praise, he cried aloud before the gate: "On behalf of God, and by order of our father Francis, depart far hence, all ye devils!" Soon afterwards peace was restored to the city, and the laws of good government were observed in great tranquillity. And so afterwards blessed Francis opened his preaching to the citizens with these words: "I speak to you as to men formerly in subjection to the Devil, and in the bonds of demons, whom however now I know to have been set free by the prayers of a certain poor man".

Chapter 75

Of the conversion of that same brother Sylvester, and of a vision that he saw

109. I think it not unfitting that the conversion of the aforesaid Sylvester, and how the Spirit moved him to enter the Order, should be joined to my present subject. Sylvester, then, was a secular priest of the city of Assisi, from whom in former days the man of God had bought stones for the repair of a church: and when in those days Sylvester saw brother Bernard (who after the Saint of God was the first plant of the Order of Friars Minor (Rather, the second. The memory of the unnamed first brother there recorded had by this time faded away.)) perfectly renouncing his property and giving it to the poor, he was inflamed by devouring greed, and complained to the man of God that the price of the stones previously sold him had not been paid in full. Francis smiled, perceiving that the priest's spirit was tainted with the poison of avarice; but wishing to give some sort of refreshment to that accursed burning, he filled the priest's hands with uncounted money. The priest Sylvester rejoiced at the gift, but wondered still more at the giver's liberality. He went home, and often thought over this thing; he murmured (a happy murmur!) that he, now growing old, was still loving the world; and wondered that that young man was thus setting all things at naught. To him, therefore, now filled with fair fragrance, Christ opened the bosom of His mercy, showing him by a vision the worth of Francis' deeds, their pre-eminent brightness in His sight, their glorious spreading over the whole world. For in his sleep he beheld a golden cross issuing from Francis' mouth, whose top touched the heavens,

and whose outstretched arms encircled either part of the world in their embrace. The priest, remorseful at the sight, shook off harmful delay, forsook the world, and became a perfect imitator of the man of God. He began his life in the Order perfectly and by the grace of Christ finished it most perfectly.

But what wonder is it if Francis appeared crucified, all whose concern was ever with the Cross? What great thing is it if, the wondrous Cross having been thus rooted within him, it sprang up out of a good ground and brought forth notable flowers, leaves, and fruits? Nothing of other kind could arise in that soil when from the first that wondrous Cross had thus claimed it all for its own.

But I must now return to my subject.

Chapter 76

How he delivered a brother from assaults of the devil

110. It happened that a certain brother had long A been vexed by temptation of the spirit, which is a more subtle and dangerous thing than the enticement of the flesh. At last he came to Saint Francis, and fell humbly at his feet shedding a flood of bitter tears, but his deep sobbing prevented him from saying anything. The father was moved to pity for him, and, perceiving him to be vexed by wicked impulses, said: "I bid you, ye devils, in the power of God, henceforth not to assault my brother as ye have hitherto presumed to do". Presently the blackness of darkness was dispersed and the brother rose up free; and he felt no more molestation than if he had never been molested.

Chapter 77

Of the baleful sow that devoured a lamb

111. That his word even when addressed to brutes was of wondrous power appears plainly enough elsewhere: but I will here touch on a case which occurs to me.

It chanced that a certain ewe brought forth a lamb one night when the servant of the Most High was lodging in the monastery of Saint

Verecondo, in the diocese of Gubbio. But a cruel sow that was there spared not the innocent creature's life, but ravenously bit the lamb to death. When men arose in the morning they found the lamb dead, and knew of a truth that the sow was guilty of that crime. When the tender father heard it he was moved to wondrous pity, and, at the recollection of another Lamb, bewailed before all who were present this lamb that had been killed, saying: "Alas, brother lamb, innocent creature, who representest the everlasting advantage of mankind! Cursed be the pitiless one that slew thee, and let no man nor beast eat of her!" Wonderful to relate, that baleful sow immediately sickened, and after suffering torments for three days, at length paid the penalty of death. It was cast into the monastery ditch, where it lay for a long time dried up like a board, nor furnished food to any famished creature.

Against Familiarity with Women

Chapter 78

Of avoiding familiarity with women; and of his manner of talking with them

112. He enjoined the absolute avoidance of that honeyed poison, familiarity with women, which leads even holy men astray; for he feared lest thereby the frail spirit should quickly be broken and the strong often be made weak. Except in the case of the most approved man he judged it to be as easy for any one associating with women to escape their contagion as (in Scriptural phrase) to walk in the fire without burning the soles of one's feet. (Proverbs 6:17) And, that he might speak by action, he showed himself a pattern of all virtue. To such a degree was a woman unwelcome to him that you would suppose her to be not so much a warning or example as an object of dread or horror. When in speaking he encountered the troublesome loquacity of women, he, with downcast face and short words, would call on them to be silent. Sometimes, on the other hand, with his eyes fixed on heaven, he seemed to be drawing thence the answers he gave to those who were muttering of earth. But those women in whose minds a holy urgency of devotion had placed the abode of wisdom, he taught by wondrous but brief discourses. Whenever he spoke with a woman he uttered what he had to say in a tone loud enough to be heard by all. Once he said to a companion: "I tell thee the truth, dearest brother, there are two women only whose faces I should recognise if I looked at them. The face of such an one (he added) and of such an one is known to me: but that of no other."

Well said, father, for the sight of them makes no one holy. Well said, I repeat, for they bring no light, but much loss, were it but loss of time! They are a hindrance to those who would take the arduous journey, and look upon that Countenance which is full of graces.

Chapter 79

A parable against looking on women

113. He was wont to pierce unchaste eyes by the following parable. A mighty king sent two messengers in succession to the queen. The first came back and reported the exact words of the message only. For like a wise man he had kept his eyes in his head and they had not darted out any whither. The other came back, and after briefly delivering his message framed a long story about the lady's beauty. "Truly, my lord, I have seen a most lovely woman. Happy he that enjoys her." But the king said: "Thou wicked servant, hast thou cast wanton eyes on my spouse? It is clear that thou hast desired to purchase the thing thou hast curiously gazed on." He ordered the first messenger to be recalled, and said: "How thinkest thou of the queen?" "Very well indeed," was the answer, "for she listened in silence, and answered wisely." "And is there no beauty in her?" said the king. "Be it thine, my lord, to look upon that; my business was to deliver the message." The king gave sentence thus: "Thou whose eyes are chaste be in my chamber yet more chaste in body: but let that man go out of my house lest he defile my couch". And the blessed father would say, "Over-confidence makes one less on one's guard against the foe. If the Devil can get but one hair in a man he will soon make it grow into a beam. Nor even if after many years he has been unable to overthrow him whom he has been tempting, does he grudge the delay if only he may get him at last. For this is his business, nor cares he for aught else by day and night."

Chapter 80

An ensample of the Saint against too great intimacy [with women]

114. It happened once, when Saint Francis was on his way to Bevagna, that he was unable to reach the place, being weak from fasting. His companion sent a messenger to a certain spiritual lady to ask humbly for bread and wine for the holy man. As soon as she heard of his need, she ran to him with her daughter (a virgin consecrated to God), bringing what was necessary. After the Saint had been refreshed and was somewhat recovered, he in his turn refreshed the mother and daughter with the Word of God; but, though he preached to them, he looked at neither in the face. As they withdrew, his companion said to him: "Brother, why didst thou not look at the holy virgin who came to thee with so much devotion?" He answered: "Who should not fear to look upon a bride

of Christ? But if one can preach with the eyes and the face, she may. have looked at me though I did not see her."

And many times in speaking of this matter he declared that all talk with women is worthless except only in the way of confession or the very brief admonition that is customary. For he said: "What business has a Lesser Brother to transact with a woman unless when she makes religious request for holy penance or for advice as to a better life?"

Of the Temptations He Suffered

Chapter 81

Of the temptations of the Saint, and how he overcame temptation

115. As the merits of Saint Francis increased so also did his enmity with the old Serpent. For the greater were the unctions of the Saint the more subtle became the temptations and the more grievous the assaults wherewith the Devil plied him. For though he had often proved the man a strenuous warrior, who had never yielded in the struggle for so much as an hour, he still endeavoured to attack his ever-victorious foe. Accordingly at a certain season there was sent to the holy father a most grievous temptation of the spirit, assuredly for the increase of his crown. Thenceforward he was hard bestead and filled with griefs, he afflicted and mortified his body, he prayed earnestly and shed plenteous tears. After having been thus assailed for more than two years, one day while he was praying in Saint Maria de Portiuncula, he heard in the spirit a voice saying: "Francis, if thou wilt have faith as a grain of mustard-seed thou shalt bid a mountain remove and it shall remove". The Saint answered: "Lord, which is the mountain that I should wish to remove?" And again he heard it said: "The mountain is thy temptation". Then he said with tears: "Be it unto me, O Lord, as Thou hast said". And forthwith all the temptation was driven away, and he was made free and wholly set at rest within.

Chapter 82

How the Devil called him and tempted him-concerning lust; and how the Saint overcame the temptation

116. At the hermitage of the brethren at Sartiano that wicked one who ever envies the advantage of the children of God presumed to attack the Saint after this manner. Seeing that he was still increasing in holiness, and was not neglecting the profit of today on account of, that of yesterday, one night while the Saint was at prayer in a cell he called him thrice, saying: "Francis, Francis, Francis "; and he answered: "What wilt thou?" And the Devil said:

"There is no sinner in the world whom the Lord will not pardon if he turn [from his sin]; but whosoever shall kill himself by hard penance shall find no mercy for ever". The Saint immediately perceived by revelation the stratagem of the foe, how he had tried to recall him to lukewarmness. What of that? The enemy forthwith attacked him in another way, and, seeing that he could not conceal this snare, he prepared another, namely, the enticement of the flesh. But in vain, for he who had unmasked the wiles of the spirit could not be tricked by the flesh. So the Devil put into him a most grievous temptation of lust. But as soon as the blessed father felt it he laid aside his garment and scourged himself with his cord with all his might, saying: "There! brother ass, thus must thou stay, thus endure the whip! The tunic belongs to Religion! it is not lawful to steal it: if thou wilt go any whither, go!" (117) But seeing that, in spite of scourging himself, the temptation did not leave him, though he had coloured all his members with weals, he opened the cell, went out into the garden, and plunged naked into deep snow. Then, collecting the snow by handfuls, he made up seven lumps of it like balls, and setting them before him began to address his body thus: "See," he said, "this large one is thy wife, those four are thy two sons and two daughters, the two others are the manservant and maidservant who are required to wait on them; and make haste and clothe them all, for they are dying of cold! If, however, the manifold care of them troubles thee, be zealous to serve God only." Forthwith the Devil departed, being put to confusion, and the holy man went back to his cell glorifying God. A certain spiritual brother, who was then engaged in prayer, saw it all by the bright moonlight; and when the Saint found out afterwards that the brother had seen him, he was much distressed, and bade him reveal the thing to no one as long as he should live.

Chapter 83

How he delivered a brother from temptation: and concerning the good of temptation

118. Once when a brother was sitting alone with the Saint he said to him: "Pray for me, kind father, for I believe I shall forthwith be delivered from my temptations, if thou deign to pray for me. For I am afflicted above my strength, and I know that this is not hid from

thee." Saint Francis replied: "Believe me, son, for I believe thee to be all the more a servant of God on account of this very thing; and know that the more thou art tempted the dearer thou art to me". And he added: "Verily I say unto thee that no one should deem himself a servant of God until he has passed through temptations and tribulations. Temptation conquered (he said) is in some sort the ring whereby the Lord espouses to Himself the soul of His servant. There are several who hug themselves over their long-standing merits and rejoice in having undergone no temptations. But forasmuch as fright alone would crush them even before the conflict, let them know that the Lord has taken thought for their weakness of spirit; for hard fights scarcely ever present themselves, except when virtue has been perfected."

How He Was Beaten by Devils

Chapter 84

How he was beaten by devils; and how that Courts are to be shunned

119. This man was not only attacked by Satan with temptations, but fought with him hand to hand. Being once invited by the lord Leo Cardinal of Saint Croce to stay a while with him in Rome, he chose as his residence a secluded tower whose nine vaulted chambers resembled the abodes of hermits. So the first night when he was going to rest after pouring out prayer to God, devils came and fiercely assaulted the Saint of God. They beat him long and severely and at last left him as if half dead. When they departed, the Saint, having at length recovered breath, called his companion who was sleeping in one of the other vaults and said to him when he came: "Brother, I would have thee stay by me, for I fear to be alone; for I was beaten by devils just now". The Saint was trembling and quaking in his members like one who is suffering from a severe fever. (120) So during the night, the whole of which they passed without sleep, Saint Francis said to his companion: "Devils are the officers whom our God appoints to punish excesses. For it is a token of His more abundant grace when naught is left unpunished in His servant while he lives in the world. I do not, however, recollect any offence which I have not, through God's mercy, washed away by satisfaction: for His fatherly condescension has ever so dealt with me as to show me in prayer and meditation the things that are pleasing or displeasing to Him. But it may be that He has allowed His officers to break in upon me because my remaining in Magnates' courts does not present a good appearance to others. When my brethren who dwell in poor 'places' hear of my being with Cardinals, they will perhaps suspect that I am overflowing with luxuries. Therefore, brother, I judge it better for him who is set as an example to fly from Courts, and to strengthen those that are braving hardships by bearing the like." Next morning, therefore, they went to the Cardinal, and after telling him all, bade him farewell.

Let them that frequent palaces mark this; and know that they have

been drawn abortive from their mother's womb. I condemn not obedience, but I denounce ambition, idleness and luxury: and finally for all "obediences," (An "obedience" is an order given to one of the brethren by a superior "on his obedience".) I emphatically set forth Francis as a model. Yet let us bear whatever displeases God, since it pleases men so!

Chapter 85

An ensample in point

121. Something occurs to me which I think should by no means be passed by. There was a brother who when he saw brethren abiding in a certain Court was attracted by some ambition or other and desired to become a courtier with them. And one night while his curiosity was stirred concerning court-life he saw in his sleep the aforesaid brethren put outside the "place" of the brethren and separated from their fellowship. Moreover he saw them feeding out of a foul and disgusting pigs' trough where they were eating pulse mixed with human dung. When that brother saw this he was exceedingly amazed, and when he arose at dawn cared no more about the Court.

Chapter 86

Of the assaults he endured in a certain solitary place, and of a certain brother's vision

122. The Saint once came with a companion to a church far off from any habitation, and, desiring to offer up solitary prayer, he said to his companion: "Brother, I would remain here alone tonight. Go thou to the hospital, and return to me at dawn." So he remained alone pouring out long and earnest prayers to the Lord; and at length he looked about to see where he might lay his head to sleep. Suddenly he was troubled in spirit, he began to feel fear and disgust, while his body trembled all over. He was clearly conscious of devilish assaults being made against him and of troops of devils rushing noisily over the roof of the building. So he arose forthwith, went out, and said, as he made the sign of the cross on his brow: "On behalf of God Almighty I bid you, ye devils, to do to my body whatsoever you have been allowed to do. I will bear it willingly,

since, having no greater enemy than the body, you will avenge me of mine adversary in that you instead of me will be wreaking vengeance thereon." And so when the devils who had assembled to cow his spirit saw that it was all the readier amid the weakness of the flesh they vanished forthwith in shame and confusion. (123) When morning was come his companion returned to him, and, finding the Saint prostrate before the altar, waited outside the choir, and himself prayed fervently meanwhile before the cross. And lo! he fell into an ecstasy, and saw among many seats in heaven one more honourable than the rest, adorned with precious stones, and radiant with all glory. He wondered at that noble throne and silently considered whose it might be, and, as he thus wondered, he heard a voice saying to him: "Yonder seat was that of one of the fallen, and it is now being kept for humble Francis". At length on coming back to himself that brother saw blessed Francis come forth from prayer, and presently he fell at his feet, placing his arms in the form of a cross, and addressed him, not as living in the world, but as already reigning in heaven, saying: "Pray, father, for me to the Son of God, that He impute not sin to me". The man of God put forth his hand and lifted him up, perceiving that something had been shown to him in prayer. At length, as they were departing thence, that brother questioned blessed Francis, saying: "What is thine own opinion of thyself, father?" "I think myself the greatest of sinners," he answered, "for if God had followed any other wicked man with such great mercy he would have been tenfold more spiritual than I." At this the Spirit said forthwith in that brother's heart: "Know that the vision thou sawest was true: for humility shall exalt the most humble to the seat lost by pride".

Chapter 87

How a certain brother was freed from temptation

124. A certain spiritual brother of long standing in the Order was afflicted by sore tribulation of the flesh, and seemed sunk in the depth of despair. And his grief was doubled daily, for his conscience, which was more tender than discerning, drove him to make confession about nothing; for such zeal ought to be shown in confessing, not the fact of being tempted, but the having yielded to temptation, even if but a little. But this brother was so shy that he

feared to disclose the whole (which amounted to nothing) to one priest, and so he divided his cogitations, and imparted some to one and others to others. But one day when he was walking with Saint Francis the latter said to him: "Brother, I tell thee that thou art not bound to confess thy tribulation any more to any one, and fear not, because that which besets thee without thy being the cause of it shall redound to thy glory, not to thy guilt. And as often as thou shalt be troubled say the Lord's Prayer seven times on my authority." The brother marvelled how the Saint knew of his trouble, and was filled with the utmost joy, and before long escaped from all tribulation.

Of True Joy of Spirit

Chapter 88

Of spiritual joy and the praise thereof; and of the evil of sloth

125. Saint Francis held that the surest remedy against the thousand wiles of the foe is spiritual joy. For he used to say: "The Devil most exults when he can filch from a servant of God his joy of spirit He carries dust that he may cast it into the conscience through even the smallest chinks, and defile the candour of the mind and the purity of the life; but when spiritual joy (he said) fills the heart, in vain does the Serpent shed his deadly poison. Devils cannot hurt Christ's servant when they see him filled with holy mirth. But when the spirit is tearful, woe-begone, and grieving it readily sinks into gloom or else turns to vain enjoyments." He strove therefore ever to be gladsome of heart, and to maintain the unction of the Spirit and the oil of joy. He avoided with the utmost care the wretched malady of spiritual sloth, so that if he felt it stealing ever so little into his mind, he flew immediately to prayer, for he said: "When God's servant (as often happens) is troubled about anything, he ought forthwith to arise and pray, and remain persistently in his heavenly Father's presence until He restores to him the joy of His salvation. For if he tarries in gloom, that Babylonian stuff will increase, and unless it be at length purged out by tears, will produce abiding rust in the heart."

Chapter 89

Of the angelic lute that he heard

126. When Saint Francis was staying at Rieti for the cure of his eyes, he called one of his companions who had been a lute-player in the world, and said: "Brother, the children of this world understand not the sacraments of God; and musical instruments appointed of old for God's praise have been converted by men's lust into means of giving pleasure to their ears. Therefore, brother, I would have thee secretly borrow a lute and bring it here, so that by a virtuous song thou mightest give some solace to 'brother body,' which is full

of pains." The brother answered: "Father, I am not a little ashamed to do so, lest men might think that I am tempted by such frivolity". "Let us give it up, then, brother," said the Saint. "It is good to give up many things to avoid shocking the opinion of others." The next night, as the holy man was watching and meditating on God, suddenly there sounded a lute of wondrous harmony and sweetest melody. No one was seen, but the music, as it floated hither and thither, marked the movements of the lute-player passing to and fro. At length, fixing his spirit on God, the holy father enjoyed such sweetness in those melodious strains that he fancied himself transported into the other world. When he arose in the morning the Saint called the aforesaid brother, related in order all that had happened, and then added: "The Lord who comforts the afflicted has never left me comfortless. For lo! although I could not hear lutes of men, I have heard a lute sweeter than theirs."

Chapter 90

How the Saint when cheered in spirit would sing in French

127. Sometimes he would behave thus: the sweet melody of the spirit bubbling up within him was wont to break forth into utterance in French, and the vein of the Divine whisper which his ear perceived in secret would burst out into a French song of joy. Sometimes, as we have seen with our eyes, he would pick up a stick from the ground, and, putting it over his left arm, would draw across it, as if across a viol, a little bow bent with a string; and, going through the proper motions, he would sing in French about the Lord. Oftentimes all this ecstasy of joy would end in tears, and the song of gladness would melt into compassion for the Passion of Christ; and then this holy man would heave continual sighs, and utter repeated groanings; and, heedless of the things he had in his hands, would be uplifted toward heaven.

Chapter 91

How he rebuked a brother that was sad and admonished him as to his behaviour

128. He once saw a companion of his wearing a sad and listless look, and said to him with no little displeasure: "It is not seemly for

a servant of God to show himself sad and dull before men, though his demeanour should always be decorous. Examine thine offences in thy chamber and weep and groan before thy God there. When thou returnest to the brethren put gloom aside and be like the rest." And after a little he said: "They who are jealous of the salvation of men envy me sore and are always trying to trouble in my companions [the joy] that they cannot trouble in me". Now so much did he love a man full of spiritual joy that at a certain chapter he had these words written down for a general admonition: "Let the brethren beware of showing themselves outwardly sullen and gloomy hypocrites, but let them show themselves rejoicing in the Lord, merry, and joyful, and gracious, as is meet".

Chapter 92

How the body ought to be treated to prevent it from murmuring

129. The Saint moreover once said: "Brother body should be provided for with discretion, that the tempest of sloth be not raised by him: and to the end he be not wearied in watching and reverent persistence in prayer, let him be deprived of occasion for murmuring. For he might say: 'I am faint with hunger; I cannot bear the burden of thy exercise'. But if after eating sufficient food he should mutter such things, let him know that a lazy beast wants the spur, and that the goad awaits a sluggish ass."

In this teaching alone did the most holy father's deeds not correspond with his words, for he subjected his body, assuredly innocent, to scourgings and hardships, multiplying wounds upon it without cause, inasmuch as the heat of the spirit had already so refined his body that even as "his soul was athirst for God, so also was his most holy flesh in manifold wise". (Psalm 62:1)

Of Foolish Joy

Chapter 93

Against vainglory and hypocrisy

130. But while he welcomed spiritual joy, foolish joy he carefully avoided, knowing that that which perfects should be fervently loved, and that which infects not less watchfully shunned. His study was to crush vainglory in the seed, and not to suffer that which might offend the eyes of his God to exist even for a moment. For oftentimes when he was being extolled by the acclamations of many, he would grieve and groan over it, immediately turning his mood to sadness. Once in winter, the only covering of his holy body being a single tunic patched with very common stuff, his warden (who was also his companion) procured a fox's skin and brought it to him, saying: "Father, thou art suffering from infirmity of the spleen and stomach; I pray thee of thy charity in the Lord to allow this skin to be sewn underneath thy tunic, or, if not the whole, at least a little of it over thy stomach". Saint Francis replied: "If thou wishest me to have this done inside my tunic, have a piece of the same size sewn on outside, which may point out to men the skin hidden inside". The brother heard this and disapproved; he objected, but without effect. Finally the warden gave way and the pieces were sewn one over the other, that Francis might not appear outwardly other than he was inwardly.

O thou who wast the same in tongue and in life, the same without and within, the same when subject and when superior! Thou who didst ever glory in the Lord lovedst naught of outward, naught of private glory! But, lest I should offend the wearers of skins, I crave their indulgence for speaking of one piece of skin having been put on for the sake of the other: for we know that those who were stripped of innocence needed tunics of skins.

Chapter 94

Of a confession of his, making against hypocrisy

131. Once at the hermitage of Poggio, (Poggio Bustone, near Rieti) about Christmas, when a large number of people had been called together to hear him preach, he prefaced his discourse with these words: "You believe me a holy man, and that is why you have come devoutly hither. But I confess to you that during all this fast I have been eating food seasoned with lard." In this way he often ascribed to pleasure what had rather been a concession to infirmity.

Chapter 95

Of a confession of his, making against vainglory

132. With the like fervour he would, if ever his spirit were moved to vainglory, at once reveal it before all men by open confession. Once when he was walking through Assisi he met an old woman who asked him to give her something. Having nothing but a cloak, with ready bounty he gave her that. But perceiving an impulse to self-complacency stealing over him, he immediately confessed before all the bystanders that he had had vainglory [in his action].

Chapter 96

His words against those who praised him

133. He strove to hide the good gifts of his Lord in the secrecy of his bosom, lest that which might be a cause of his falling should become matter for boasting. For oftentimes when many were proclaiming him blessed he would answer: "I may have sons and daughters yet: praise not one who is [not] secure. No one should be praised whose end is uncertain. If the Giver should ever choose to take away what he has lent, the body and soul would alone remain, and these even the unbeliever possesses." Such was his language to those who praised him. But to himself he said: "If the Most High had given as much to a robber, he would be more thankful, Francis, than thou art".

Chapter 97

His words against those who praised themselves

134. He would often say to the brethren: "No one ought to flatter

himself with unjust applause on account of anything that a sinner can do. A sinner (said he) can fast, pray, weep, mortify his own flesh. But this he cannot do: be faithful to his Lord. Herein therefore we should glory, if we render to God His glory, if serving Him faithfully we ascribe to Him whatever He gives. The flesh is man's greatest foe. It knows not how to recollect anything so as to grieve over it, nor to foresee anything so as to fear it. Its study is, to use up the present. And, what is worse, it claims for itself, and transfers to its own glory what has been given not to it, but to the soul. It gathers from without praise for its virtues, applause for its watchings and prayers. It leaves the soul nothing, and seeks payment even for its tears."

Of His Concealment of the Stigmata

Chapter 98

135. We may not keep silence concerning the thick veil wherewith he covered those marks of the Crucified, meet to be revered even by the highest Spirits, nor concerning his carefulness in hiding them. From the time when true love of Christ had first "changed" the lover "into the same image," he concealed and hid that treasure with such care that it was long before even his familiar friends were aware of it. But God's Providence would not suffer it to be hid for ever and not to come to the eyes of those dear [to the Saint]. And indeed the exposed position of the limbs did not allow this thing to be concealed. Once when one of his companions saw the stigmata in his feet, he cried: "What is this, good brother?" "Mind your own business," said Saint Francis. (136) Another time the same brother asked for Saint Francis' tunic to shake it out, and, seeing that it was bloody, he said to the holy man after he had returned it: "What manner of blood is this wherewith the tunic seems stained?" But the Saint put his finger to his eye, and answered: "Ask what that is, if you don't know it to be an eye". He rarely washed his hands all over, only bathing the fingers, lest that thing should be revealed to the bystanders. His feet he washed most rarely, and not less secretly than rarely. If any one asked for his hand to kiss he half uncovered it, holding out the fingers, only so far as to leave place for the kiss, and sometimes he held out his sleeve only instead of his hand. He wore woollen socks on his feet that they might not be seen, putting skin over the wounds to lessen the harshness of the wool. But though the holy father could not wholly hide from his companions the stigmata in his hands and feet, he was distressed if any one looked at them, wherefore also his companions themselves, filled with prudence of spirit, used to turn their eyes away whenever any necessity compelled him to uncover his hands or feet.

Chapter 99

How a certain brother beheld the stigmata by means of a pious fraud

137. While the man of God abode at Siena a brother from Brescia

chanced to come there who greatly desired to see the stigmata of the holy father, and earnestly besought brother Pacifico that he might do so. Brother Pacifico said: "When I am about to depart hence I will ask to kiss his hands, and when he gives them I will wink at thee, and thou wilt see". So they both came to the holy man prepared to start, and Pacifico knelt down, and said to him: "Bless us, dearest mother, and give me thy hand to kiss". He kissed the hand (unwillingly held out), and winked at the brother that he might look; then he asked for the other hand, and kissed it and showed it to him. As they were departing, Saint Francis suspected that there had been a pious fraud (as was indeed the case), and immediately called brother Pacifico back, and judging such devout curiosity to be undevout said to him: "God pardon thee, brother, for thou givest me much distress sometimes". Pacifico at once fell at his feet, and humbly asked: "What distress have I given thee, dearest mother?" But Saint Francis made no answer; and the incident closed in silence.

Chapter 100

How a certain brother saw the wound in his side

138. Now though the uncovered position of the limbs disclosed the wounds in his hands and feet to some, no one was worthy to see the wound in his side in his lifetime except one only and he only once. For whenever the Saint had his tunic shaken out he would cover the wound in his side with his right arm. Sometimes, however, he hid that blessed wound by putting his left hand over his pierced side. But when one of his companions was scratching him, that brother's hand slipped down to the wound and caused him great pain. One day another of the brethren who was seeking, with prying curiosity, to see what was hidden from others said to the holy father: "Shall we shake out thy tunic, father?" "God reward thee, brother," said the Saint, "for I want it to be done." So as he was taking it off that brother looked attentively at him and clearly saw the wound in his side. He alone saw it while the Saint was alive, none of the others until after his death.

Chapter 101

Of the hiding of virtues

139. In such wise had that man abjured all glory that savoured not of Christ: in such wise had he laid an eternal anathema on men's applause. He knew that the reward of fame lessens the secret [reward] of the conscience and that it is far more harmful to make a wrong use of virtues than to be without them. He knew that it is as great a virtue to guard what one has got, as it is to get it. Alas! more of our deeds are occasioned by vanity than by charity, and the world's applause has greater weight than the love of Christ. We do not judge the feelings, we do not "try the spirits," and when vainglory has urged us to some action we fancy it has been produced by charity. Moreover if we have done but a little good, we cannot bear the weight of it, but rid ourselves of all that while we are alive and lose the shore at last. We patiently endure not to be good, we may not bear not to be seen, not to be believed: and so we live wholly in the praise of men, for that we are naught but men.

Of His Humility

Chapter 102

Of Saint Francis' humility in dress, in opinion and in behaviour. Against [trusting to] one's own opinion

140. Humility is the guard and ornament of all the virtues. When the spiritual building does not rest on this foundation, it tends to fall even when it seems to be growing. That nothing might be wanting to a man adorned with so many gifts this grace had filled Saint Francis in more abundant measure, for he reputed himself nothing but a sinner, whereas he was the ornament and splendour of every kind of holiness. In order that he might lay the foundation which he had learnt from Christ, he strove to build himself on this virtue of humility. Forgetful of the things he had gained, he fixed his eyes on his failings alone, considering that more was lacking to him than was present with him. The only thing he coveted was to become better, and to add fresh virtues to the former, wherewith he was not content. He was humble in dress, humbler in opinion, humblest in his own repute. This prince of God was distinguished as a Superior by this bright jewel alone: that among the "lesser" he was the least. It was this virtue, this title, this token that showed him to be the Minister-general. All loftiness was absent from his mouth, all pomp from his gestures, all ostentation from his actions. In many matters he had learnt his opinions by revelation, but yet he would bring them into discussion and prefer the opinions of others. He believed his companions' advice to be safer, and others' views seemed to him better than his own. He used to say that any one who kept back the treasure-chests of his own opinion had not left all for the sake of God. He preferred to hear blame of himself rather than praise, for that the former drove him to amendment while the latter impelled him to fall.

Chapter 103

Of his humility toward the Bishop of Terni and toward a certain peasant

141. He was once preaching to the people of Terni, and when he

had finished, the bishop of that city commended him in the presence of all, saying: M At this last hour God has enlightened His Church by this man, poor and despised, simple and unlettered: wherefore we are bound ever to praise the Lord, knowing that He has not dealt so with every nation". On hearing this, the Saint took it wondrous kindly that the bishop in such plain terms should have judged him to be contemptible; and, as they entered the church, he fell at the bishop's feet and said: "Truly, lord bishop, thou hast done me great honour in that, whereas others deprive me of the things that are mine, thou alone hast kept them unharmed. Thou, I say, like a discerning man, hast separated the precious from the worthless, ascribing praise to God and worthlessness to me."

142. Not only did the man of God behave himself humbly to his superiors, but even as regards his equals and those in low estate he was readier to be admonished and corrected than to admonish. One day accordingly when he was riding on an ass (being unable to walk through weakness and infirmity) and was passing through the field of a peasant who was working there at the time, the peasant ran to him and eagerly asked whether he were brother Francis? And when the man of God had meekly replied that he was, the peasant said: "Strive to be as good as all men say thou art; for many put their trust in thee. I advise thee therefore never to come short of expectation!" Now when Francis the man of God heard this he dismounted, fell down before the peasant and humbly kissed his feet, thanking him for deigning to admonish him.

And so, though he was so famous that very many reckoned him a Saint, he deemed himself worthless before God and men, and felt no pride over his abounding fame and sanctity nor even over the great number of brethren and sons so holy that had been given him as an earnest of the reward of his merits.

Chapter 104

How in a chapter at Michaelmas, 1220, he resigned his office: and concerning a certain prayer

143. In order to observe the virtue of holy humility, a few years after his conversion, Francis, in a chapter in the presence of all the brethren of the Order, resigned the office of Superior in these

words: "Henceforth I am dead to you; but here," he said, "is brother Peter Cathanii, and let you and me all obey him". Whereupon he bowed down before him and promised him obedience and reverence. The brethren therefore began to weep, and grief drew loud wailings from them when they saw themselves in some sort orphaned of such a father. Then the blessed Francis arose, clasped his hands, and said, raising his eyes to heaven: "O Lord, I commend to Thee the family that Thou hast hitherto committed to me; and now, because of the infirmities which Thou knowest, sweetest Lord, being unable to take care of it, I entrust it to the Ministers. Be they bound to give account to Thee in the day of judgment, if any brother perish through their negligence or example, or even their harsh correction." Thenceforth he remained in subjection until death, behaving with greater humility than any of the other brethren.

Chapter 105

How he resigned his companions

144. Another time he resigned all his companions to his vicar, saying: "I will not seem to be singular by reason of this privilege of freedom: but let brethren accompany me from 'place' to 'place' just as the Lord shall inspire them". And he added: "I have seen before now a blind man with a little dog only to show him the way". This then was his glory, to put aside the appearance of any singularity or ostentation, that the power of Christ might dwell in him.

Chapter 106

His words against those covetous of office: and description of a Lesser Brother

145. Now when he saw that some were panting after office, whom in addition to other things their mere eagerness for power alone rendered unworthy, he used to say that they were not Lesser Brethren but that they had fallen from glory, having forgotten the vocation wherewith they had been called. And when some wretched men resented being removed from office (since it was the honour, not the burden of it, they sought) he would silence them by many discourses. He once said to his companion: "I should not seem to

myself a Lesser Brother unless I were in the state which I will describe to thee". And he said: "Suppose that, being set over the brethren, I go to the chapter, and preach to them and admonish them and at the end they speak against me, saying, 'An unlettered and contemptible man will not do for us: therefore we will not have thee to reign over us, because thou art uneloquent, simple and ignorant,' and finally I am expelled with obloquy and despised by them all. I tell thee that unless I heard these words with unchanged looks, with unchanged gladness of mind, and with unchanged purpose of sanctity, I should by no means be a Lesser Brother." And he would add, "Office is an occasion of falling, praise, of headlong destruction; the soul's gain lies in the humility of subjection". Why then do we pursue danger rather than gain, when time has been given us that we may make gain?

Chapter 107

How he would have the brethren be in subjection to the clergy; and wherefore

146. Now although he would have his sons be at peace with all men and behave themselves as little ones toward everybody, still he taught by word and showed by his example that they should be specially humble toward the clergy. For he used to say: "We have been sent for the salvation of souls in aid of the clergy, that what is found wanting in them may be supplied by us. Each one shall be rewarded not in respect of his authority but of his toil. Know ye, brethren, that the fruit of souls is most pleasing to God, and that it can be better gained by peace with the clergy than by strife with them. But if they hinder the people's salvation, 'vengeance belongeth unto God,' and He will reward them in due time. Therefore, be subject to them who bear rule, (*praelatis*, a term applied to all who bear rule in the Church) that so much as in you lies no jealousy may spring up. If you are sons of peace, you shall win clergy and people to God, and this the Lord judges to be more acceptable than to scandalize the clergy and win the people only. Cover their lapses," said he, "supply their manifold defects, and when you have done so, be the more humble."

Chapter 108

Of the respect he showed to the Bishop of Imola

147. Once, when Saint Francis came to Imola, a city of Romagna, he presented himself before the bishop of the place to ask him for licence to preach. The bishop said: "Brother, it is enough for me to preach to my people". Saint Francis bowed his head and humbly went out, but after a short time he came back again. The bishop said: "What dost thou want, brother? What art thou seeking for now?" And blessed Francis replied: "My lord, when a father has driven a son out of one door he must come in again by another". The bishop, conquered by this humility, embraced him with glad looks, and said: "Thou and all thy brethren may for the future take my general licence to preach in my diocese, for this holy humility of thine has earned this privilege".

Chapter 109

Of the mutual humility and charity of himself and Saint Dominic

148. Those two bright lights of the world, Saint Dominic and Saint Francis, were once at Rome with the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope. And as in turn they uttered honeyed words concerning God, the bishop at last said to them: "In the primitive church the pastors of the church were poor, and men who glowed with charity and not with greed. Why (he said) do we not make bishops and prelates of your brethren, who excel other men in teaching and example?" There was a contention between the Saints as to which of them should answer; each strove not to anticipate but to give way to the other; nay, each was urging the other to answer. Each, therefore, was foremost in respect of the other, while each paid honour to the other. At length humility conquered Francis, so that he did not put himself forward, and it also conquered Dominic so that in humble obedience he answered first. Blessed Dominic, therefore, gave this answer to the bishop: "My lord, my brethren, if they only recognize it, have been raised to a good degree, nor, so far as I can, will I allow them to acquire any other mark of dignity". After he had finished this brief reply, blessed Francis bowed down before the bishop and said: "My lord, my brethren have been styled Lesser that they presume not to become greater. Their calling teaches them to be in lowliness, and to follow the footsteps of Christ's humility, that thereby at last they may be

exalted above the rest in the sight of the Saints. If (he said) you would have them bear fruit in the Church of God, hold and keep them in the state to which they have been called, and bring them back to lowliness even against their will. Therefore, father, I pray you by no means to allow them to rise to high office, lest their pride should be proportionate to their poverty and they should wax arrogant against the rest." Such were the answers of these blessed men.

149. What say ye, sons of the Saints? Jealousy and envy prove you degenerate as much as greed of honours proves you bastards. "Ye bite and devour one another," nor do your wars and strifes arise from aught but your lusts. You have to wrestle against the hosts of darkness, you have to struggle hard against armies of devils, and you turn the points of your swords against one another. The fathers, filled with wisdom, turn their faces to the mercy-seat and look familiarly on one another; but the sons, filled with envy, are to one another grievous to behold. What shall the body do if it has a divided heart? Surely the teaching of piety would advance more fruitfully throughout the world if the bond of charity joined the ministers of God's word more firmly together; for our speaking and teaching are chiefly mistrusted because the presence among us of a leaven of hatred is shown by evident signs. I know that the good on either side are not concerned herein, but the bad, who, as I should judge, deserve to be rooted out, lest they taint the holy. What in conclusion shall I say of them who savour of loftiness? The fathers reached the kingdom by the way of humility, not of loftiness; the sons walk about in the ring of ambitious desires and ask not for the way to the city of their habitation. What remains but that we reach not the glory of them whose way we do not follow? Be this far from us, O Lord. Make the disciples humble beneath the wings of humble masters; make kindred spirits kind; "and mayest thou see thy children's children and peace upon Israel".

Chapter 110

How each of them commended himself to the other

150. When the servants of God had finished their answers, as we have said above, the Lord of Ostia, much edified by the discourses of both, gave boundless thanks to God. And as they departed

thence, blessed Dominic asked Saint Francis if he would deign to give him the cord wherewith he was girded. Saint Francis was reluctant to do this, being moved by humility to refuse the request even as the other was moved by charity to make it. However, the happy devotion of the suppliant prevailed, and Dominic most devoutly girded himself beneath his inner tunic with the cord that had been given him. At last they clasped hands and commended themselves each to the other most sweetly: and the one Saint said to the other: "I would, brother Francis, that thy Religion and mine might be one, and that we might live in the Church after the like pattern". And when at length they parted, Saint Dominic said to several who were standing by: "Verily I say unto you that the other Religious ought to follow this holy man Francis, so great is the perfection of his holiness".

Of Obedience

Chapter 111

How, for true obedience' sake, he ever had a warden

151. In order that he might make gain in many ways and turn the whole present time into merit, this most prudent merchant chose to be driven with the bridle of obedience and to submit himself to the government of another. Therefore not only did he resign the office of General, but, for the sake of the greater advantage of obedience, he asked for a good warden for himself whom he might specially honour as his Superior. So he said to brother Peter Cathanii, to whom he had previously promised holy obedience: "I ask thee for God's sake to entrust thy charge as concerning me to one of my companions, to whom, as to thyself, I may yield reverent obedience. I know (he said) the fruit of obedience and I know that to one who has put his neck under the yoke of another, no time passes without gain." And so his earnest request was granted and he remained in subjection everywhere until his death, always reverently obeying his own warden. And he once said to his companions: "Among other things which God's mercy has deigned to grant me, it has bestowed on me this grace, that I would obey a novice of an hour's standing, were he assigned to me as warden, as carefully as I would any one however ancient or discreet. A subject (he said) ought to consider his Superior not as a man, but as Him for whose sake he is in subjection: and the more contemptible the ruler, the more pleasing the humility of the subject who obeys."

Chapter 112

How he described the truly obedient man; and of the three sorts of obedience

152. At another time when blessed Francis was sitting with his companions he sighed forth some such lament as this: "There is scarce any Religious in all the world that obeys his Superior perfectly". His companions, much moved, said to him: "Tell us, father, what perfect and supreme obedience is". But he answered,

describing the truly obedient man under the figure of a dead body: "Take a corpse, and put it where you please, you will see that it does not resist being moved, grumbles not at its position, and if let alone, does not cry out. If it be placed on a throne it will look, not above, but beneath; if arrayed in purple its pallor will be doubled. This," he added, "is the truly obedient man; he discusses not wherefore he is moved, cares not where he is placed, does not press to be transferred elsewhither. When raised to office, he keeps his wonted humility; the more he is honoured, the more unworthy he deems himself to be." Another time, when speaking of the same matter, he said that commands issued on request were properly licences, while those enjoined without having been asked for he named sacred obediences: both, he said, were good, but the latter were the safer. But he believed that obedience to be supreme, and to have nothing of flesh and blood in it, whereby one goes by Divine inspiration among the unbelievers, whether for one's neighbours' gain or from longing for martyrdom. And to ask for this "obedience" he judged to be very acceptable to God.

Chapter 113

How that an order "on obedience" should not lightly be given

153. Therefore he deemed that an order should rarely be given "on obedience," and that the weapon which ought to be the last should not be hurled at first. He said that the hand must not quickly be laid on the sword; but that he who when ordered "on obedience" hastened not to obey neither feared God nor respected man. Nothing is truer than these words. For what is authority to command in a rash officer but a sword in the hand of a madman? And what is more hopeless than a Religious who despises obedience?

Chapter 114

Of a brother whose hood he threw into the fire for having come to see him without an "obedience," though drawn by devotion to him

154. He once took off the hood of a brother who had come [to him] alone without an "obedience," and ordered it to be thrown into a large fire. When no one rescued the hood (for they feared the

father's countenance which was somewhat displeased) the Saint bade it be drawn out of the flames, and it was uninjured. Though the Saint's merits could bring this about, some merit on the part of that brother was perhaps not wanting: for eagerness to see the most holy father had constrained him, though discretion, the sole charioteer of the virtues, was not there.

Chapter 115

Of those who set a good or bad example: of the example of a certain good brother: and of the behaviour of the brethren of old time

155. He used to declare that the Lesser Brethren had been sent by God in these latest times to display examples of light to those who were wrapped in the darkness of sin. He would say that he was filled with the sweetest perfumes and anointed with the efficacy of precious ointment when he heard the exploits of holy brethren in distant parts of the world. It happened that a brother named Barbaro had once said an abusive word to another brother in the presence of a nobleman of the island of Cyprus; but on seeing that the brother had been somewhat wounded by this attack, he took some asses' dung, and, fired by revenge against himself, put it into his mouth and chewed it, saying: "Let the tongue which has poured forth the venom of anger against my brother feed on dung". When the knight saw this he was struck with amazement, and departed greatly edified: and from that time placed himself and his goods at the free disposal of the brethren. And all the brethren without fail observed this custom, that if ever one of them spoke an angry word to another, he fell on the ground straightway and caressed the foot of the offended brother, even against the latter's will, with blessed kisses. In such things the Saint exulted, I mean when he heard of his sons bringing forth of themselves examples of holiness: and he heaped blessings most worthy of all acceptance on such brethren as should lead sinners to the love of Christ by word or deed. He would have his sons correspond by a true resemblance to the zeal for souls wherewith himself was perfectly filled.

Chapter 116

Of some who set a bad example: of the Saint's curse upon them, and of his grievous displeasure thereat

156. So also any one who dishonoured the holy Religion by wicked deeds or example incurred the terrible sentence of his curse. Thus one day when he was told that the Bishop of Fondi had said to two brethren who had come before him, and by way of showing greater contempt for themselves allowed their beards to grow to excessive length: "Beware that the beauty of the Religion be not smirched by such presumptuous innovations"; the Saint arose forthwith, stretched out his hands toward heaven, and in a flood of tears broke out into words of prayer, or rather of imprecation, after this manner: "O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst choose the Apostles twelve in number, and though from this number one fell, the rest clave to Thee, and preached the holy Gospel, being filled with one spirit, Thou, Lord, in this last hour, remembering Thy mercy of old, hast planted the Religion of the brethren to prop Thy faith, and that the mystery of Thy Gospel might be fulfilled by their means. Who, then, shall make satisfaction for them before Thee, if not only do they not display examples of light to all men (for which purpose they have been sent forth), but rather show forth works of darkness? Let them who by their evil example confound and destroy that which Thou hast built up in the past by the holy brethren of this Order, and dost not cease to build up - let them be cursed by Thee, most holy Lord, by all the Court of Heaven, and by me, thy little servant."

Where are they who proclaim themselves happy in his blessing and boast that they had gained his intimacy as fully as they chose? If (which God forbid) they shall be found to have displayed in themselves the works of darkness to the peril of others, without having repented, woe unto them, woe of eternal damnation!

157. "The best brethren," he would say, "are put to confusion by the works of the bad brethren, and are under judgment through the example of the wicked, even in that wherein they have not sinned themselves. Wherefore they are piercing me with a cruel sword and are plunging it into my bowels all day long." Wherefore, chiefly on this account, he withdrew himself from the brethren's company lest he might chance to hear anything unfavourable concerning any one of them, to the renewing of his grief. And he would say: "The time will come when through evil examples the Religion beloved of God shall be so ill spoken of that it shall be ashamed to show itself in public. But those who at that time shall come to enter the Order

shall be led by the operation of the Holy Ghost only, nor shall flesh and blood put any stain upon them, and they shall be truly blessed of the Lord. And although, as charity grows cold, which makes the saints work fervently, meritorious works be not found in them, unbounded temptations shall come upon them, and those who in that time shall have been found approved shall be better than their predecessors. But woe to them who while hugging themselves on the mere show of religious conversation shall be numbed in sloth and shall not stedfastly resist the temptations that are permitted for the trial of the elect: for they alone who shall have been approved shall receive the crown of life: and meanwhile the wickedness of the reprobate is tasking them."

Chapter 117

Of the revelation made to him by God concerning the state of the Order; and that the Order shall never fail

158. But he was greatly comforted by visitations of God, whereby he was assured that the foundations of his Religion would ever remain unshaken. And it was also promised to him that the number of those who were perishing would undoubtedly be made good by the substitution of elect brethren. For once when, distressed by evil examples, he betook himself in his distress to prayer, he brought back this rebuke from the Lord: "Why, thou mannikin, art thou distressed? Have I so set thee as shepherd over My Religion that thou knowest not that I am its chief Protector? I set thee, a simple man, over it to the end that those who will may follow after the things that I do in thee for the others to copy. It is I who have called [the brethren], I who will keep and feed them, and who will repair the falling away of some by the substitution of others, so that even where a substitute is not born I will cause him to be born. Be not therefore distressed but work out thy salvation,' for even though the Religion were reduced to the number of three, it shall ever, through My gift, remain unshaken." Thenceforth he said that a multitude of imperfect brethren were overpowered by the virtue of one holy man, for that the thickest darkness yields to the ray of a single light.

Against Idleness and the Idle

Chapter 118

A revelation made to him as to when he was God's servant and when not

159. From the time when this man began to cleave to God after casting away transitory things he scarce allowed an instant of time to pass unoccupied. Indeed, though he had already brought a great store of merits into the treasure of God, he remained ever fresh, and ever more ready for spiritual employments. He deemed it a grave offence not to be doing some good thing, and judged that not to be always going forward was to be going back. So one night while he abode in a cell at Siena he called his sleeping companions to him and said: "Brethren, I asked the Lord that He would deign to show me when I am His servant and when not. For (said he) I would be naught else but His servant. And Himself the most gracious Lord has now deigned to give me this answer: 'Know that thou art then truly My servant when thou thinkest, speakest, and doest holy things'. And therefore I have called you, brethren, because I would be ashamed in your sight if ever I fail to do any of these things."

Chapter 119

Penance for idle words imposed at Portiuncula

160. Another time at Saint Maria de Portiuncula, the man of God, considering that what has been gained by prayer often flows away through idle words spoken after prayer, ordained this remedy against the fault of idle words: "Let every brother who utters an idle or unprofitable word be bound to own his guilt forthwith, and for each idle word to say the Lord's prayer once. And my will is, that in case he shall have been the first to blame himself for his fault, he say the Lord's prayer for his own soul; but if he have been first rebuked by another, that he apply the prayer to the soul of him that rebuked him."

Chapter 120

How he, himself a worker, hated the idle

161. He used to say that the lukewarm, who did not apply themselves earnestly to some occupation, should soon be spewed out of the mouth of God. No one could appear before him idle without receiving a sharp reprimand. For he himself, the pattern of all perfection, used to work and labour with his hands, suffering naught of that best gift of time to run to waste. And once he said: "I desire that all my brethren work and be employed, and that those that know no craft, learn": and he added, giving the reason, "In order that we may be the less burdensome to men; and lest in idleness heart or tongue wander into what is unlawful". Now the gain or hire of labour he did not leave to the determination of the labourer, but to that of the Warden or Family.

Chapter 121

A lament addressed to Saint Francis touching idle and gluttonous brethren

162. O holy father, let me be permitted to lift up on high today a lament for those who are called thine! The practice of virtue is hateful to many of them, who, by desiring to rest before they have toiled, prove themselves to be not sons of Francis but of Lucifer. Warriors are less abundant with us than weaklings, though these having been born to toil ought to reckon their life as a warfare. These will not profit through action, and cannot through contemplation. When they have distressed all by their singularity, plying their jaws more than their hands, they hate "him that rebukes in the gate," nor do they "suffer themselves to be touched with the tips of the fingers". But still more do I wonder at the impudence of these men (to use blessed Francis' word), for whereas at home they could only have lived by their sweat, now, without toiling, they are fed through the sweat of the poor. Wondrous prudence, indeed! Though they do nothing, you would think them always occupied. They know their meal-times; and if ever they feel hungry they complain that the sun has gone to sleep. Am I to believe, kind father, that these monsters of men are worthy of thy glory? No, not even of thy tunic. Thou didst ever teach men to seek in this wanton and fleeting time the wealth of merit that they might not hereafter be brought to beggary: but these enjoy not even their country thoroughly, for they must afterwards pass into exile. This

pestilence rages among the subjects, because the superiors are shutting their eyes to it, as though it were possible to escape the punishment of those whose vice they are tolerating.

Of the Minsters of God's Word

Chapter 122

What manner of man a preacher should be

163. He would have as ministers of God's word men who should apply themselves to spiritual studies and not be shackled by other duties. For he used to say that these had been chosen by a great King to deliver to the people the decrees they had heard at His mouth. And he would say: "The preacher should first draw in by secret prayer what he is afterwards to pour forth in sacred discourses; he must rather grow hot within than utter cold words outwardly". He declared that this office is to be reverenced, and that those who minister in it should be respected by all. These (he said) are the life of the body, the assailers of devils, the lantern of the world. But the doctors of sacred theology he deemed to be worthy of more ample honours; for once he caused it to be written as a general order: "We ought to honour and revere all theologians and those who minister to us the words of God as men who minister to us 'spirit and life'". And once when he was writing to blessed Antony he caused these words to be put at the beginning of the letter: "To brother Antony, my Bishop".

Chapter 123

Against those who covet empty praise. Exposition of a word of prophecy

164. But he declared that those preachers are to be pitied who often sell what they do for the hire of empty praise. And sometimes he would heal the swellings of such men by such an antidote as this: "Why do ye boast of men converted, when it is my simple brethren that have converted them by their prayers?" Finally the text "Until the barren has borne very many" he expounded in this way: "The 'barren' is one of my poor simple brethren who is not entrusted with the duty of begetting children in the Church. He shall bring forth 'very many' in the Judgment because the Judge shall then reckon to his glory those he is now converting by private prayers. 'She who has many children shall wax feeble,' because the preacher who

rejoices in many children gotten, as it were, by his own power, shall then know that he has had nothing of his own in them." Nor did he greatly love those who desire to be praised as orators rather than as preachers, and speak with elegance and not with earnestness. Those again (he said) allot their time ill who spend all on preaching and none on devotion. He had praise indeed for a preacher, but he must be one who at the right season should be wise for himself and taste for himself.

Of His Contemplation of the Creator

Chapter 124

165. Though eager to quit the world as being a place of pilgrimage and exile, this happy traveller was not a little comforted by the things that are in the world. As to the princes of darkness, indeed, he used it for a battlefield; but as to God, for a bright mirror of His goodness. In every piece of workmanship he praised the Craftsman; whatever he found done he referred to the Doer of it. He exulted in all the works of the Lord's hands, and penetrated through those pleasant sights to their life-giving Cause and Principle. In beautiful things he recognised Him who is supremely beautiful; all good things cried out to him, "He who made us is the Best". Everywhere he followed the Beloved by the traces He has impressed on all things; he made for himself of all things a ladder whereby he might reach the Throne. He embraced all things with an unheard-of rapture of devotion, speaking to them of the Lord and exhorting them to praise Him. He refused to put out lanterns, lamps, or candles, not suffering his hand to dim the brightness which he regarded as a sign of the Eternal Light.

Over rocks he walked reverently out of regard for Him who is called the Rock. When he had to recite the verse "On a rock hast Thou exalted me," he used to say, in order to employ a more reverent expression, "Beneath [my] feet hast Thou exalted me". When the brethren were cutting wood he forbad them to cut down a whole tree, so that it might have hope of sprouting again. He bade the gardener not dig up the outlying parts round the garden, in order that in their seasons the greenness of grass and the beauty of flowers might proclaim the beauteous Father of all things. In the garden he ordered a plot to be set apart for sweet-scented and flowering plants, that they might cause those that should look upon them to remember the Eternal Sweetness. He picked up worms from the way that they might not be trodden on, and ordered honey and the best wine to be provided for bees that they might not perish from want in the cold of winter. He called by the name of brother all animals, though in all their kinds the gentle were his favourites. Who is sufficient to tell all these things? For that Original Goodness,

which shall be all in all, shone forth already to this Saint as all in all.

Chapter 125

How the creatures returned his love: and concerning the fire which hurt him not

166. All the creatures therefore strove to return the Saint's love and to show their gratitude for his services; they rejoiced in his caresses, granted his requests, and obeyed his commands. Let me relate a few instances. When he was suffering from disease of the eyes and had been induced to submit to treatment, a surgeon was summoned to the place. So he came and brought an iron instrument for cauterization, and ordered it to be put into the fire until it should be red-hot. Then the blessed father, to encourage his body now shaken by horror, spoke thus to the fire: "My brother fire, who dost outvie all other things in splendour, the Most High hath created thee mighty, fair, and useful. Be kind to me at this hour, be courteous, for I have loved thee of old in the Lord. I pray the great Lord who created thee to temper thy heat now so that, burning me gently, I may be able to bear it." Having finished his prayer he made the sign of the cross over the fire, and thenceforth remained undismayed. The surgeon took the glowing iron in his hands: the brethren, yielding to human weakness, fled: the Saint with cheerful readiness exposed himself to the iron. The iron was plunged hissing into the tender flesh, and the cauterization was slowly made from the ear to the eyebrow. What pain that fire inflicted is declared by the words of the Saint, who knew best what it was, for when the brethren who had fled came back, the father said with a smile: "Faint-hearted and poor-spirited ones, wherefore did ye fly? I tell you of a truth I felt no heat of fire nor any pain in my flesh." Then turning to the doctor: "If the flesh is not well burnt," said he, "apply the iron again". The doctor, whose experience in such cases was very different, proclaimed this as a Divine miracle, saying: "I tell you, brethren, I have seen wondrous things today".

I believe that the man to whom at his will cruel things became gentle had returned to primal innocence.

Chapter 126

Of the little bird that rested in his hands

167. When Saint Francis was crossing the lake of Rieti in a little boat on his way to the hermitage of Greccio, a fisherman presented him with a waterfowl, that he might rejoice over it in the Lord. The blessed father received the bird with joy, and then, opening his hands, gently invited it freely to fly away. The bird would not depart, but rested in his hands as in a little nest, and the Saint remained with his eyes lifted up in prayer. Then, after a long delay, as though coming back to himself from elsewhere, he sweetly told the bird to return without fear to its former liberty. And so, on receiving this permission, with the holy man's blessing, the bird showed its joy by some motion of its body, and flew away.

Chapter 127

Of the falcon

168. When blessed Francis, flying as he was wont from the sight of men and intercourse with them, was dwelling in a certain hermitage, a falcon which was building his nest there joined himself to him in a close alliance of friendship. For always at night the bird by his song and the noise he made gave warning of the hour when the Saint was wont to rise for Divine worship. And this was most pleasing to the Saint of God, because the bird by the great care which he displayed toward him prevented him from being delayed by sloth. But when the Saint was more than usually oppressed by some infirmity the falcon spared him and did not give the signal for matins so early; but (as if taught by God) gently rang his vocal bell about dawn.

No wonder if the other creatures reverenced the chief lover of the Creator!

Chapter 128

Of the bees

169. In a certain mountain a cell was once made A wherein the servant of God performed the most rigid penance for forty days. When he departed thence at the end of that time, the cell, being in

a lonely place, remained untenanted; and an earthen vessel, out of which the Saint used to drink, was left there. When some men visited the spot later out of reverence for the Saint, they found the vessel full of bees, who with wondrous skill were building their little cells therein; surely signifying the sweetness of contemplation which the Saint of God had there enjoyed.

Chapter 129

Of the pheasant

170. A nobleman of the territory of Siena sent a pheasant to blessed Francis, who was ill. He received it joyfully, not because he desired to eat it, but in the manner in which he was always wont to rejoice in such creatures for love of the Creator; and he said to the pheasant: "Praised be our Creator, brother pheasant!" and, turning to the brethren, "Let us try now whether brother pheasant will stay with us or go to his usual haunts which are better suited to him". So one of the brethren at the Saint's bidding carried the pheasant and put it in a vineyard far off, but the bird hastened back forthwith to the father's cell. Again Saint Francis ordered it to be taken farther away, but it again returned as fast as possible to the cell door, and came in, almost forcing its way under the tunics of the brethren who were at the door. So the Saint ordered the pheasant to be carefully fed, embracing it and caressing it with sweet words. When a certain physician, very devoted to the Saint of God, saw this, he asked the brethren to let him have the pheasant, not to eat, but to take charge of, out of reverence for the Saint. In short, he took the bird home with him; but the pheasant on being separated from Saint Francis altogether refused to eat, as long as he was away from him, just as if a wrong had been done him. The physician was astonished, and immediately carried the pheasant back to the Saint, telling him in order all that had happened. As soon as the bird was put down on the ground and saw its father, it put away its sadness and began to eat joyfully.

Chapter 130

Of the cicala

171. Near the cell of the Saint of God at Portiuncula a cicala used to

perch on a fig-tree, singing sweetly. Sometimes the blessed father would hold out his hand to her, and call her kindly to him, saying, "My sister cicala, come to me," and she immediately came up on his hand, as though endowed with reason. Then he said to her: "Sing, my sister cicala, and praise the Lord thy Creator with a joyful song". And without delay she began obediently to sing, and ceased not until the man of God mingled his own praise with her songs, and bade her fly back to her accustomed place, where she remained for eight days in succession, as if bound. When the Saint came down from his cell he always touched her with his hands, and bade her sing, and she was always eager to do his bidding. Then he said to his companions: "Let us give our sister cicala leave to depart, for she has now gladdened us enough with her praise; that our flesh may not have occasion for vainglory by such things". And forthwith the cicala dismissed by him went away, and never appeared there again. Seeing all this the brethren wondered greatly.

Of His Charity

Chapter 131

Of his charity; and how he set himself as a pattern of perfection for the salvation of souls

172. If the strength of love had made him a brother to the other creatures it is no wonder if Christ's charity made him more than a brother to those who have been stamped with the Creator's image. For he used to say that nothing is more important than the salvation of souls, often alleging in proof of this that the Only-begotten of God deigned to hang upon the cross for souls. Hence his wrestlings in prayer, his going about preaching, the excessive efforts he made in order to give examples of conduct. He deemed not himself a friend of Christ unless he loved the souls that Christ loved. And this was the chief cause of his reverence for the Doctors, namely, that being Christ's helpers they performed the same office with Him. As for the Brethren, he loved them with an unbounded passionate affection as being of the household of a peculiar faith and united by the fellowship of an eternal inheritance. (173) Whenever the hardness of his own life was blamed he answered that he had been given to the Order for a pattern, so that like an eagle he might incite his young ones to fly: and accordingly though his innocent flesh, which already was subjecting itself voluntarily to the spirit, needed no scourge for offences committed, still, for example's sake, he renewed his chastisement of it, keeping to these hard ways on account of others alone. And rightly, for more regard is paid to the deeds than to the words of those in authority. It was by deeds, father, that thou didst discourse most sweetly, didst persuade most readily, didst prove most surely. Though they speak with the tongues of men and angels but show no examples of charity they profit me little and themselves not at all. But where there is no dread of the reprover, and self-will takes the place of reason, (Juvenal, Sat, vi., 222) are seals sufficient for salvation? (i.e., though our Superiors be headstrong and void of charity, does the seal or sanction of their official position enable us to get any spiritual good from them? (see Matthew 23:3)) Yet we should do as they tell us, that the runnels may trickle through scanty channels to

little plots of ground. Meanwhile let us gather a rose from among the thorns, so that the greater may do some service to the lesser.

Chapter 132

Of his care for his subjects

174. But who takes Francis' care for his subjects now? He is ever lifting up his hands to heaven for the true Israelites, and, at times forgetful of himself, his brethren's salvation is his first object. Low at the feet of Majesty he is offering the sacrifice of the spirit for his sons, and compelling God to pour benefits upon them. On the little flock he had drawn after him he looks with a loving sympathy full of misgiving, lest after losing the world they may perchance lose heaven too. He reckoned that he would be inglorious unless he made those entrusted to him glorious with him, those whom his spirit was bringing forth with more grievous travail than his mother's when she had borne him.

Chapter 133

Of his compassion for the sick

175. Great was his compassion for the sick, and great his care for their needs. If ever the kindness of layfolk sent him electuaries he gave them to the other sick, though he needed them more than they. He entered into the feelings of all the sick, and gave them words of sympathy when he could not give words of help. He would himself eat on fast-days that the sick might not be ashamed to eat, nor was he ashamed of begging for meat through the streets of a town for a sick brother. Yet did he admonish the ailing to bear their wants patiently, and not to cause scandal by their discontent, though everything might not be done to their satisfaction. Accordingly in a certain Rule he caused these words to be written: "I beg all my sick brethren not to be angry or annoyed in their sicknesses either against God or against the brethren. Let them not be too eager in asking for remedies, nor long overmuch to deliver the flesh which must soon die and which is the soul's enemy. Let them give thanks for all things, so that they may desire to be such as God would have them to be. For those whom God has foreordained to life eternal he disciplines with the goads of

scourging and sickness, even as He Himself has said 'I correct and chastise those whom I love'."

176. He once took into a vineyard a sick man whom he knew to be longing to eat grapes, and, sitting down under a vine, himself began to eat first, to encourage the other to eat.

Chapter 134

Of his tenderness toward the weak-hearted: and concerning those that do contrary to this

177. But he cherished with greater kindness and upheld with greater patience those sick whom he knew to be "like children tossed to and fro," harassed by temptations, and fainting in spirit. Wherefore he avoided sharp correction (where he saw he might do so without danger) and spared the rod that he might spare the soul. He used to say that it is the proper function of a Superior who is a father and not a tyrant to forestall occasions of delinquency, and not to allow a brother to slip whom if he were wounded it would be hard to lift up. Woe for the pitiable madness of our time! Not only do we fail to raise up or keep back the tottering, but sometimes we push them over. We think nothing of robbing that Chief Pastor of one little sheep for whom on the Cross He "offered up strong crying with tears". It was otherwise with thee, holy father, who hadst rather amend the erring than ruin them! But we know that the plagues of self-will are more deeply rooted in some, and that for them the cautery is needed and not the ointment: and it is clear that for very many it were more wholesome to be scourged with a rod of iron than to be soothed with the hand. But oil and wine, rod and staff, zeal and pity, ointment and cautery, dungeon and shelter - all have their proper time; the God of vengeance and Father of mercies requires all these things, but yet He would have "mercy rather than sacrifice".

Chapter 135

Of the Spanish brethren

178. Sometimes this most holy man in wondrous fashion was rapt in God and exulted in spirit when a good odour reached him from

his sons. It once happened that a Spaniard, a clerk devoted to God, enjoyed a sight of Saint Francis and discourse with him. And among other things concerning the brethren in Spain he gladdened the Saint with this report: "Thy brethren," said he, "in our land, who dwell in a poor little hermitage, have so arranged their way of life that half of them should be busied in domestic cares and half should have leisure for contemplation. (Accordingly every week the active half took the place of the contemplative and the contemplative returned from rest to toilsome tasks.) One day when the table had been laid and the absent summoned by a signal, all assembled but one who was of the contemplative company. After waiting a little they went to his cell to call him to table; whereas he was being refreshed at a more bountiful table by the Lord. For they found him stretched out on the ground face downward in the manner of a cross, and giving no sign of life by breathing or motion. Two candlesticks were burning at his head and at his feet and lighted up the cell in wondrous fashion with a ruddy light. They left him in peace, that they might not trouble his rapture or 'awake the beloved until she pleased'. So the brethren peeped through the chinks of the cell, standing behind the wall, and looking through the lattice. In brief, whilst 'the friends were hearkening to her that dwelleth in the gardens,' (Canticles 8:13) suddenly the light disappeared and the brother became a man again. He arose straightway, came to table, and owned his fault in being late. Thus it came to pass in our land," said the Spaniard. Saint Francis could not contain himself for joy at being sprinkled with such a perfume of his sons. He arose forthwith to give praise, and - as if his only glory were to hear good of the brethren - cried with a full heart: "I yield thee thanks, O Lord, Sanctifier and Ruler of the poor, who hast made me glad in hearing such things of my brethren. Bless, I pray, those brethren with Thy most bounteous blessing, and sanctify by a special gift all who by good example cause their profession to be fragrant."

Chapter 136

Against those leading an evil life in hermitages: and how he would that all things should be in common

179. Though the preceding story makes us know the Saint's charity which bade him rejoice over the progress of his loved ones, yet we

believe that those who lived otherwise in hermitages met with no gentle rebuke: for many turn the abode of contemplation into a place of idleness, and change the hermit-rule, which was devised for perfecting the soul, into a sink of pleasure. The system of the anchorites of these times is that each should live as he pleases. This does not apply to all; for we know that saints living in the flesh are leading exemplary lives as hermits; we know also that the fathers who went before bloomed in solitude. O that the hermits of our time may not degenerate from that primitive beauty the praise of whose righteousness remains for ever!

180. Saint Francis, in exhorting all his followers to charity, encouraged them to show to one another the kindness and friendliness of members of a family. "I will," said he, "that my brethren show themselves sons of the same mother, and that if one asks another for a tunic, or cord, or anything else, that other should give it liberally. Let them share their books and all their pleasant things; nay, rather, let one compel another to take them." And lest in this matter he should be speaking of anything which Christ was not working in himself, he was the first to do all these things.

Chapter 137

How he gave his tunic to two French brethren

181. Two French brethren, men of great sanctity, happened to meet Saint Francis. The sight of him gave them untold gladness, and their joy was doubled by their having earnestly desired to see him for a long time. After sweet and affectionate discourse their ardent devotion caused them to ask him for his tunic. He took it off straightway, remaining naked, and most respectfully gave it to them; then, accepting by way of kindly exchange the poorer of their two tunics, he put it on. He was ready not only to give away such things, but even to spend himself as well, and whatever he was asked for he most gladly bestowed.

Of Slander

Chapter 138

How he would have slanderers punished

182. Finally, since the spirit filled with charity hates those that are hateful to God, this quality also flourished in Saint Francis. Surely he held slanderers in horror and execration above all other kinds of wicked men, saying that they carry poison on their tongues and taint others therewith. Tale-bearers, therefore, as biting fleas, he avoided, and (as we ourselves have seen) turned away his ears when they were speaking that they might not be defiled by hearing such things. Thus when he once heard one brother blackening the reputation of another, he turned to his vicar, brother Peter Cathanii, and spoke these terrible words: "There is instant danger to the Order unless slanderers are put down. The sweet savour of many will soon stink unless the mouths of the stinking ones are stopped. Arise, arise, examine carefully, and if thou find the accused brother innocent, punish the accuser so severely as to render him a marked man. Hand him over to the Florentine bruiser if thou canst not punish him thyself. (He used to call brother John of Florence, a man of high stature and great strength, 'the bruiser'.) Do thou and all the Ministers give the utmost heed that this pestilent disease spread no further."

Sometimes he sentenced one who had stripped his brother of the glory of his good name to be stripped of his tunic, and suffered him not to lift up his eyes to God unless he had first restored that which he had taken away. Hence it was that the brethren of that time, making as it were a special abjuration of this vice, had firmly agreed together carefully to shun all [discourse] that might detract from the honour of others or redound to their disgrace. Well done, indeed! For what is a slanderer but the gall of humanity, the leaven of wickedness, the infamy of the world? What is a double-tongued man but the scandal of Religion, the poison of the cloister, the breaker-up of unity? Alas! the earth's surface is full of poisonous animals, nor can any good man escape the teeth of envious rivals. Rewards are offered to informers, and when innocence has been

undermined the palm is sometimes given to falsehood. Lo! if any one cannot live by his own honesty he may earn food and clothing by laying waste the honesty of others. (183) Accordingly, Saint Francis often used to say: "These are the slanderer's words: 'I lack perfection of life; I have no store of learning or of peculiar grace; and so I have no standing either with God or with men. I know what I will do: I will besmirch the elect and curry favour with those in authority. I know that my Superior is but a man and that at times he follows the same plan as I - to cut down the cedars so that the bramble alone may be seen in the wood.'" (see Judges 9:15) Go, wretch, feed on human flesh, and since thou canst not live otherwise, gnaw the entrails of thy brethren! Such men strive to appear good, not to become so; they accuse others of vices, but do not put them away themselves. They praise those alone by whose authority they desire to be cherished; uttering no praises but such as they think will be reported to him they have praised. They trade on the pale face of abstinence for pernicious praises that they may appear spiritual men "who judge all things but themselves are judged by no man". Let them rejoice in the report of sanctity, not in the fact, in the name of angels, not in the power!

His Description of Minister-General

Chapter 139

How he ought to bear himself toward his companions

184. Near the end of the time of Saint Francis' being called to the Lord, a brother, who was always concerned for things Divine, filled with tenderness toward the Order, made request to him, saying: "Father, thou wilt pass away and the family that has followed thee will be left in the vale of tears. Point out some one, if thou knowest any in the Order, on whom thy spirit may rest, and on whom the burden of the office of Minister-General may safely be laid." Saint Francis answered, accompanying all his words with sighs: "My son, I see no one sufficient to be leader of an army so manifold, and shepherd of a flock so large. But I will paint for you, and (as the saying is) fashion with my hand, one in whom it may be clearly seen what manner of man the father of this family should be. (185) He should be a man of the highest character, of great discretion, and of praiseworthy reputation: a man without private affections, lest, while he shows favour to a part, he gender scandal in the whole. A man fond of the study of holy prayer, who should assign certain hours of the day to his own soul and certain to the flock entrusted to him. For very early in the morning he should before aught else attend celebrations of mass (*missarum sacramenta debet praemittere*), and in prolonged devotion commend himself and the flock to God's protection. But after prayer let him appear in public to be heckled by all, ready to give answer to all and to provide for all with meekness. He should be a man who will not commit foulness by accepting persons, and will not care less for the lowly and simple than for the wise or great. A man who, although he may be allowed to excel in the gift of learning, ought in his behaviour rather to 'bear the image' of pious simplicity, and to foster virtue. A man who will execrate money, the chief cause of corruption in our profession and perfection, and who being the head of a poor Religion and offering himself to be copied by the rest will never make wrong use of treasure-chests. For such an one his habit and a little book should suffice as regards himself, and as regards the brethren a box of pens and a seal. Let him not be a collector of

books nor much intent on reading, lest he be taking from his office what he is spending by anticipation on study. Let him be a man who, since he is the last refuge of the troubled, can comfort the afflicted; lest, if healing medicines be not found with him, the malady of despair should prevail over the sick. That he may bend the froward to meekness, let him abase himself and waive somewhat of his right, in order to gain a soul for Christ. Let him not shut up his bowels of pity towards those who have forsaken the Order, as if they were sheep who had perished, knowing that the temptations which can drive them to such a fall must be overpowering. (186) I would have him honoured by all in the stead of Christ, and provided for in all necessary things with all good-will. But he ought not to take pleasure in honours nor to delight more in being applauded than in being reviled. If through weakness or fatigue he should need more palatable food, he should not eat it in private, but in public, so as to relieve other invalids from shame in providing for their bodies. To him chiefly it belongs to examine the secrets of the conscience, and to pluck out the truth from hidden sources; but not to lend an ear to tattlers. Finally he ought to be a man who shall by no means cause the strong fabric of justice to totter through his clinging to power, and shall feel so great an office to be more of a burden than a dignity. Let not excessive gentleness, however, produce apathy, nor mistaken indulgence the breaking-up of discipline; but rather while he is an object of love to all let him none the less be a terror to them that do evil. I would also that he should have companions endowed with goodness, who, even as he himself, should set an example of all good things, men stern against pleasures, strong against hardships, and, in a becoming way, so genial in their demeanour as to welcome all comers with a holy cheerfulness. Such a man (he said) ought the Minister-General of the Order to be."

Chapter 140

Of the Provincial Ministers

187. All these qualities the happy father sought for in the Provincial Ministers, though in the Minister-General every one of them ought to be singularly conspicuous. He wished them to be genial toward those beneath them, and to show such gentleness and good-will that

delinquents should not be afraid to trust themselves to their affection. He would have them moderate in their orders, forgiving in cases of offence, readier to suffer wrongs than to pay them back, foes to vice, healers to the vicious. In short he would have them such that their life should be a mirror of discipline for the rest. Yet he would have them treated with all honour and valued, as those who bore the burden of care and toil. He declared that those who should govern the souls entrusted to them according to such a pattern and law deserved the highest rewards with God.

Chapter 141

What the Saint answered when he was questioned about the Ministers

188. Saint Francis being once asked by a certain brother why he had so cast all the brethren out of his own keeping and given them over to strange hands, as though they in nowise belonged to him, replied: "Son, I esteem the brethren as highly as I can; but if they followed my footsteps I should assuredly love them more and not make myself strange to them. For there are some among the number of the Superiors who are drawing them away to other things, putting before them the examples of the ancients, and setting little store by my admonitions. But the end will show what they are doing." And shortly afterwards when he was oppressed by exceeding infirmity he raised himself up on his couch and said in heat of spirit: "Who are they that have snatched the Religion of myself and the brethren out of my hands? If I get to the chapter-general then I will show them what my will is!" And that brother continued, "Wilt thou not also change those Provincial Ministers that have so long abused their freedom?" And the father made answer, groaning, in these terrible words: "Let them live as they like, for the perdition of a few is a lesser loss than that of many". (He did not say this on account of all the Ministers but on account of some who by the length of time during which they had held office seemed to have claimed an hereditary right to it.) And this he specially commended in the Regular Prelates (i.e., in those who bore office in the Order) of every kind: Not to change their behaviour except for the better, not to court popularity, not to exert their power, but to do their duty.

Of Holy Simplicity

Chapter 142

What holy simplicity is

189. The Saint was in some sort more especially careful to show forth in himself and to value in others holy Simplicity, the daughter of Grace, the sister of Wisdom, and the mother of Righteousness. Not every kind of simplicity, however, met with his approval, but that alone which, being content with her God alone, sets at naught all else. She it is who makes her boast in the fear of God and knows not how to do evil or speak it. She it is who examines herself, but condemns no one in her judgment, who surrenders to her superior the authority that is his due and covets no authority. She it is who, not deeming Greek glories to be the best, chooses to act, rather than to learn or teach. She it is who in regard to all the laws divine leaves to those that are to perish wordy digressions, ornaments and embellishments, display and curious inquiry, and seeks not for the bark but for the pith, not for the shell but for the kernel, not for many things, but for much, for the supreme and enduring Good. Her did the most holy father require both in lettered and in lay brethren, not deeming her to be the opponent but the true sister of Wisdom, though easier in the getting and readier in the using for those who are poor in learning. Accordingly in the Praises which he composed concerning the virtues he says: "Hail, Queen Wisdom! The Lord save thee with thy sister pure holy Simplicity!"

Chapter 143

Of brother John the Simple

190. As Saint Francis was passing near a village by Assisi a very simple man named John who was ploughing in a field came up to him and said: "I wish that thou wouldst make me a Brother, for I have long been desiring to serve God". The Saint rejoiced, as he considered the man's simplicity, and answered gladly: "Brother, if thou wilt become our companion, give to the poor, if thou hast anything, and I will receive thee when thou hast got rid of thy

property". The man straightway loosed the oxen, and offered one to Saint Francis. "Let us give this ox to the poor," said he, "for I am worthy to receive so much of my father's goods." The Saint smiled, but approved his simple disposition not a little. When his parents and his little brothers heard this they came running together with tears, grieving more for the loss of the ox than for that of the man. But the Saint said to them: "Be easy in your minds: see, I give you back the ox though I take away the brother!" So he took the man with him, vested him in the garb of the Religion, and, on account of the grace of simplicity which he had, made him his special companion. And so when Saint Francis was in any place engaged in meditation, John the Simple would immediately copy in his own person whatever gestures or movements Saint Francis made; for if Saint Francis spat, he spat; if Saint Francis coughed, he coughed; he accompanied the Saint's sighs and weeping by sighing and weeping himself; if the Saint raised his hands to heaven, so did he, observing him diligently as a model and copying everything himself. The Saint noticed this, and asked him once why he did so. "I have promised," said he, "to do all that thou doest; it is dangerous for me to leave anything out." The Saint rejoiced over this pure simplicity, but gently forbade him to act thus any more. And not long afterwards the simple man in that purity of his passed away to the Lord. And, as the Saint would often put forward this man's life for imitation, he would playfully call him not "brother John" but "Saint John".

Observe that it is a characteristic of pious simplicity to abide by the rule of one's betters and ever to rely on the examples and instructions of the Saints.

Who shall grant to human wisdom to follow him even now that he is reigning in heaven with the zeal wherewith pious Simplicity copied him on earth? What can I add but this: Simplicity followed the Saint in life and went before him into life.

Chapter 144

How he fostered unity among his sons, and spoke of it in a parable

191. It was ever his constant wish and watchful A study to preserve among his sons the bond of unity, to the end that those who had been drawn by the same spirit and begotten by the same father

might be peacefully nurtured in the bosom of one mother. He would have the greater united to the lesser, the wise joined to the simple by brotherly affection, the distant coupled together by the cement of love. He once put forth a moral parable, containing no little instruction. "Suppose," he said, "that all the Religious who are in the Church are gathered together in one chapter-general. Therefore, since lettered and unlettered are there, learned men and those that without learning know how to please God, one of the wise and one of the simple are appointed to preach. The wise man deliberates (for he is wise) and cogitates thus: 'There is no place for a display of learning here, where men perfect in learning are present; nor would it be in good taste for me to make myself conspicuous for curious disputation by uttering subtleties before the most subtle men. It will perhaps be more fruitful to speak simply.' The appointed day comes; the assemblies of the saints are gathered together, longing to hear the sermon. The wise man comes forth clothed in sackcloth and with ashes sprinkled on his head; and, to the astonishment of all, cuts his words short, preaching rather by action: 'We have promised great things,' he says, 'greater things have been promised to us, let us keep the former and sigh for the latter. Pleasure is brief, punishment perpetual, the suffering short, the glory infinite. Many are called, few chosen, all rewarded.' The hearers' hearts are touched, they burst into tears, and reverence this truly wise man as a Saint. But the simple man says in his heart: 'The wise man has been beforehand with me in all I was going to say or do! But I know what I will do: I know some verses of the Psalms; I will play the wise man, since the wise man has played the simple one! 'The next day's sitting comes: the simple man arises; proposes a psalm as his theme: and, filled with the Spirit of God, discourses in virtue of the inspiration given him by God with such fervour, subtlety and sweetness that all, filled with amazement, may truly say 'God discourses with the simple ones'."

192. This moral parable which the man of God thus put forth he expounded as follows: "Our Religion," he said, "is a very great company, and as it were a general synod, gathered from men in every part of the world living after one pattern. Herein the wise turn to their own advantage that which belongs to the simple, when they see the illiterate with fiery energy seeking heavenly things, and those untaught by men wise through the Spirit in spiritual things.

Herein also the simple make their profit out of the things that belong to the wise, when they see illustrious men who might live in the world gloriously anywhere, humbled to the same degree with themselves. This it is (he said) that makes the beauty of this blessed family to shine forth, whose manifold adornment affords no small pleasure to the father of the family."

Chapter 145

In what manner the Saint would be shaven

193. When Saint Francis was shaved he often said to the barber: "Take care not to make me a large tonsure. For I wish that my simple brethren may have a share in my head." (i.e., he would not have himself distinguished from the rest by a specially large tonsure) He wished, in a word, that the Religion should be open to the poor and unlettered and not only to the rich and learned. "With God," he said, "there is no acceptance of persons, and the Holy Ghost, the Minister-General of the Religion, rests equally on the poor and simple." He wished to put these words into the Rule, but the sealing which had taken place (i.e., the confirmation of the Rule by the Bull of Honorius III, 29 November 1223) precluded it.

Chapter 146

How he would have great clerks coming to the Order expropriate themselves

194. Saint Francis once said that when a great clerk joined the Order he ought in some sort to resign even his learning, in order that, having stript himself of such a possession, he might offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. "Learning," he said, "makes many men indocile, not suffering a certain stiffness of theirs to be bent by the discipline of humility. Wherefore I would have a lettered man first of all make this petition to me: 'See, brother, I have lived long in the world, and have never truly known my God. Give me, I pray thee, a place removed from the turmoil of the world where I may grieve over my past years, and where, gathering together the scattered energies of my heart, I may reform my soul for better things.' What, think you, would the man become who should make such a beginning? Verily he would go forth to all

things with the strength of a lion unchained, and the blessed juice which he had tasted at the beginning would increase in him with continual profit. Such a man might at last be confidently assigned to the true ministry of the word, because he would pour forth that which was boiling within him."

Pious teaching indeed! For what so necessary for one returning from a very different sphere, as to banish and purge away by exercises in humility the inveterate and deep-seated affections of the world? [Surely] whosoever should enter into the school of perfection would quickly attain to perfection.

Chapter 147

How he would have the brethren to learn; and how he appeared to a companion who was applying himself to preaching

195. Saint Francis was grieved if learning were sought to the neglecting of virtue, especially when "each one did not abide in the vocation wherein he was called at the beginning". "My brethren," he said, "who are being led by curiosity after learning, will find their hands empty in the day of retribution. I would rather have them strengthened in the virtues, so that when times of tribulation come they may have the Lord with them in their distress. For tribulation is indeed coming (said he), wherein books shall be thrown into cupboards (*In fenestris*. Or the meaning maybe "left on window-sills," or perhaps "thrown out of window". *Fenestra*, besides meaning a window, was used of a cupboard or receptacle for the pyx in which the reserved sacrament was kept.) and hiding-places as useless." He did not say this because the study of Scripture displeased him, but in order to withdraw the brethren in general from being over-anxious to learn, and because he would have them all accomplished in charity rather than smatterers in research. Besides, he foreboded that times were not far off wherein he knew that learning would be an occasion of falling, while the having applied oneself to spiritual things would be a support to the spirit.

A lay brother who wanted to have a psalter and asked Saint Francis' leave was offered ashes instead of a psalter.

After his death Saint Francis appeared in a vision to one of his

companions who was at one time busying himself about preaching, and forbade him to do so, bidding him walk in the way of Simplicity. God is his witness that after this vision he felt such sweetness that for several days the dew of the father's words seemed actually to be dropping into his ears.

Of His Special Devotions

Chapter 148

Of his special devotions, and how he was moved by the mention of "the love of God"

196. It will perhaps be neither unprofitable nor unfitting to touch briefly on the special devotions of Saint Francis. Though as one who enjoyed the unction of the Spirit he was devout in all things, still, he felt a special emotion with regard to certain special things. Among other expressions in common use he could never hear the words "the love of God" without undergoing a kind of transformation; for immediately on hearing those words he was aroused, stirred, inflamed, as though some inner chord of his heart were being touched by the plectrum of an outward voice. He declared that to offer such payment as "the love of God" in exchange for alms was a noble prodigality, and that those who valued it at less than money were most foolish. For himself, he kept unfailingly until his death the resolution he had made while yet mixed up with the things of the world, never to refuse any poor man who asked him for anything for the love of God. For once when a poor man asked him for something "for the love of God," and he had nothing, he stealthily took scissors and hastened to divide his tunic with him; which thing he would have done, had he not been detected by the brethren; whereupon he caused the poor man to be otherwise provided for. "The love of Him who loved us much, is much to be loved," he said.

Chapter 149

Of his devotion to the angels; and what he used to do for love of Saint Michael

197. The angels, who are with us in our warfare, who walk with us amid the shadow of death, Saint Francis venerated with the utmost affection. He used to say that everywhere they are companions to be revered, but, none the less, also guardians to be called upon. He taught that their presence must not be outraged, and that we ought

not to presume to do before them what we should not do before men. And forasmuch as the psalmody in the choir was performed in the angels' sight, he desired that all who could should come together to the oratory, and there sing with wisdom. He would often say that Saint Michael should receive more excellent honour for that he had the office of presenting souls [before God]; and in honour of Saint Michael he used to fast most devoutly for forty days between the Feast of the Assumption and the Feast of Saint Michael; for he said: "Every one should make some special offering of praise or of gift to God in honour of so great a Prince".

Chapter 150

Of his devotion to our Lady, to whom he specially committed the Order

198. To the Mother of Jesus he bore unspeakable love, for that she made the Lord of Majesty our brother. To her he rendered peculiar praises, poured forth prayers, and made offerings of affection, the number and quality whereof the tongue of man could not express. But - what most rejoices us - he constituted her the Advocate of the Order and placed beneath her wings the sons whom he was about to leave, that she might cherish and protect them unto the end. O Advocate of the poor, fulfil thou to us the office of Protectress until the time foreordained of the Father!

Chapter 151

Of his devotion to the Nativity of the Lord; and how he would have all creatures cared for at that season

199. He observed with ineffable eagerness the Nativity of the child Jesus above all other festivals, declaring that it was the feast of feasts, whereon God, become a tiny infant, hung upon a human breast. He cherished with hungry thoughts the image of those infant limbs, and his compassion for the Child, which flooded his heart, made him even lisp words of sweetness, as infants do. When there was a talk of not eating flesh, because it was a Friday, he answered brother Morico, saying: "Thou sinnest, brother, in calling the day on which a Child has been born to us Friday. I would," said he, "that the very walls should eat flesh on such a day, or, if they cannot, that they should at any rate be greased outside!"

200. On that day he would have the poor and hungry feasted by the rich, and oxen and asses indulged with extra corn and hay. "If I can have speech of the Emperor," he said, "I will beseech him that a general ordinance may be made that all who can are to scatter corn and grain on the ways so that on a day of such high festival the little birds may have plenty, especially our sisters the larks." He would recall, not without tears, with what penury the poor Virgin was compassed about on that day. Thus while he was once sitting at dinner, a brother spoke of the blessed Virgin's poverty, and called to mind the need of Christ, her son. Straightway Saint Francis rose from table, and with grievous sobbing and plenteous tears ate the rest of his bread on the bare ground.

He used to say that that was a royal virtue which shone so excellently in the King and in the Queen. And also when the brethren in private were deliberating which virtue made one the most a friend to Christ, he would answer, as though opening the secret of his heart: "Know ye, my sons, that Poverty is a special way of salvation, whose fruit is manifold, and well known to few".

Chapter 152

Of his devotion to the Lord's Body

201. Toward the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he glowed with the fervour of all his being, marvelling at the thought of that loving condescension, of that most condescending love. He deemed it to be treating the Sacrament with no small contempt if, having leisure, he did not hear at least one mass daily. He often communicated, and that so devoutly as to make others devout. Attending on that reverend Ordinance with all reverence, he offered the sacrifice of all his members; and as he received the immolated Lamb, he immolated his spirit with the fire that was ever burning on the altar of his heart. Therefore he loved France as the friend of the Lord's Body, and longed to die there by reason of her reverence for hallowed things. At one time he determined to send brethren throughout the world with precious pyxes in order that wheresoever they might observe the Price of our Redemption unmeetly kept, they might deposit it in the best place possible. It was his will that great reverence should be shown to the priestly hands which in the offering of that Sacrifice have been invested

with an authority so Divine; and he used often to say: "If I chanced to meet at the same time any Saint coming from heaven, and any poor priest, I would do honour to the presbyter first, and would sooner go to kiss his hands; and I would say [to the other], 'Oh, wait, Saint Lawrence! for this man's hands handle the Word of Life, and possess something that is more than human'".

Chapter 153

Of his devotion to the relics of the Saints

202. The beloved man, who showed himself most attentive to Divine worship, left nothing that pertains to God dishonoured by neglect. When he was at Monte Casale, in the province of Massa, he bade the brethren most reverently to remove the sacred relics from an abandoned church to a "place" of the brethren, for he was deeply grieved that they should now for a long time have been defrauded of their due devotion. But having been obliged to go elsewhere, his sons, heedless of their father's bidding, neglected the merit of obedience. One day when they were preparing to celebrate, they removed the cloth from the altar, as is customary, and found thereon fair and fragrant bones. They were greatly amazed as they looked upon things they had never seen before. The Saint of God returned soon after and inquired diligently whether they had done his bidding concerning the relics. The brethren humbly confessed that they were guilty of having neglected his command, and received pardon together with punishment. And the Saint said: "Blessed be the Lord my God, who of Himself has fulfilled that which ye ought to have done".

Mark diligently herein Francis' devotion, give heed to God's good pleasure concerning our dust, and magnify the praise of holy obedience. For God complied with the prayers of him whose voice man obeyed not.

Chapter 154

Of his devotion to the Cross, and of a certain hidden mystery (sacramentum)

203. Finally, who might comprehend, who express how far he was

from glorying save in the Cross of the Lord? To him alone was it given to know, to whom alone it was given to experience. Verily even though through some sense we should in ourselves perceive these things, words, defiled as they are by their use in the expression of the common things of every day, would be utterly wanting to declare such wonders. And perchance it was for the very reason that it could not have been unfolded in speech that that thing had to be laid open in his flesh. Let silence therefore speak where language fails, because even the thing signed cries out where the sign fails. Be this alone announced to human ears, that it is not yet wholly clear wherefore that mysterious thing appeared in the Saint; for, as revealed by him, it derives its reason and purpose from the future. 1 He shall prove true and trustworthy whose witnesses shall be Nature, the Law and Grace.

Of the Poor Ladies

Chapter 155

How he would have the brethren behave themselves toward them

204. It is not meet to leave unmentioned the spiritual building (much nobler than the earthly one) which the blessed father, guided by the Holy Ghost, founded in that place (i.e., at Saint Damian) for the increasing of the city on high, after he had repaired the material church. It is not to be believed that it was for the repair of a tottering structure, destined in any case to perish, that Christ spoke to him from the wood of the Cross, and that in a manner so astounding as to fill those that hear of it with awe and grief: but, even as the Holy Ghost had foretold in the past, the Order of Holy Virgins was to be established there; which Order (like a polished heap of living stones) was one day to be brought thither for the replenishing of the house in the heavens. But after that the Virgins of Christ began to assemble in that place, and to be gathered together from divers parts of the world, vowing most perfectly to observe the deepest poverty, and to adorn themselves with every virtue; though their father gradually withdrew his bodily presence from them, still he extended to them his affectionate care in the Holy Ghost. For when by many tokens of perfection he knew them to be approved and ready to bear the loss of all things for Christ, and to endure toil, and never to decline from the holy commandments, he promised ever stedfastly to bestow the help and counsel of himself and his brethren on them and on others who should profess poverty in a similar way of life; which thing he diligently performed as long as he lived, and, when nigh unto death, commanded to be evermore performed, and that not negligently, declaring that it was one and the same spirit that had led the brethren and those Poor Ladies forth from this world.

205. When the brethren sometimes wondered why Saint Francis did not more frequently visit such holy Handmaids of Christ with his bodily presence, "Think not, dear brethren," said he, "that I love them not perfectly; for if it were a fault to cherish them in Christ, was it not a greater fault to have united them to Christ? And,

indeed, it had been no wrong not to call them, but not to care for them when called were the utmost unkindness. But I am giving you an example, that as I am doing, so ye should also do. I will not that any of you should of his own accord offer to visit them; but I order that unwilling and most reluctant men, provided they be spiritual and approved by a long and worthy life, be appointed for their service."

Chapter 156

How he reprimanded certain brethren who liked going to nunneries

206. Once accordingly when a brother who had two daughters of perfect conversation in a nunnery said that he would gladly be the bearer to that place of some trifling gift on the Saints' behalf, the Saint rebuked him very sharply, inculcating words not now meet to be reported. And so he sent the present by another who refused to go, but did not obstinately persist in his refusal.

Another brother went in winter to a nunnery on some errand of compassion without being aware of the Saint's strong objection to such a visit. When the fact became known to the Saint, he made that brother walk several miles naked when the snow was deep upon the ground.

Chapter 157

Of the sermon he preached by example rather than by word

207. The holy father who had been often entreated by his Vicar that he would, when abiding at Saint Damian, set forth God's word to his daughters, was at length overcome by the Vicar's urgency, and consented to do so. When the Ladies were gathered together as usual to hear the word of God (but not less in order to see their father) he raised his eyes to heaven, where his heart ever was, and began to pray to Christ. Then he ordered ashes to be brought, and having spread some of them on the ground in a circle round him, placed the remainder on his head. They waited for him to begin, but as he remained in persistent silence within the circle of ashes, no small astonishment arose in their hearts. Then the Saint suddenly stood up, and to their amazement repeated by way of

sermon [the Psalm] "Have mercy on me, O God," and having finished it went out in haste. By the power of this symbolic preaching the Handmaids of God were filled with such contrition that they shed abundant tears and scarce refrained from punishing themselves with their own hands. He taught them by his action to repute themselves ashes, and that naught but what befitted such repute entered his heart concerning them. Such was his conversation with the holy women; such his visitation of them, most profitable indeed, but compulsory and rare. This was his will for all the brethren: that while serving those Ladies for the sake of Christ whose handmaids they are, they should, even as full-fledged birds, ever be on their guard against the snares placed before them.

Of His Commendation of the Rule of the Brethren

Chapter 158

Of blessed Francis' commendation of the Rule; and of a brother who carried it about with him

208. He was full of the most ardent zeal for the common Profession and Rule, and on such as should be zealous concerning it he bestowed a singular blessing. For this Rule he declared to be for his brethren the book of life, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of perfection, the key of Paradise and the covenant of an eternal alliance. He would that all should have it, that all should know it, and that it should everywhere speak to the inner man for consolation in weariness and for a memorial of the plighted oath. He taught them ever to keep it before their eyes to remind them of the life they should lead, and, what is more, that they should die with it. Not unmindful of this teaching, a certain lay-brother, who we believe is to be honoured among the number of the martyrs, won the palm of a glorious victory. For as he was being haled to martyrdom by the Saracens, he bowed his knees humbly and said to his companion, holding the Rule in his uplifted hands: "Of all the things that I have done against this holy Rule, dearest brother, in the sight of God's Majesty and in thy sight I proclaim myself guilty". This brief confession was followed by the sword, by the which martyrdom he ended his life: and afterwards he became renowned through signs and wonders. He had entered the Order so young that he could scarcely bear the fasting prescribed by the Rule; but yet, though still a little boy, he wore a corslet of mail next his skin. Happy boy, who began happily in order to finish still more happily!

Chapter 159

A vision, tending to the commendation of the Rule

209. The most holy father once saw a vision, consisting in a heavenly miracle, which related to the Rule.

At the time when the brethren were conferring together touching the confirmation of the Rule, Saint Francis, who was very anxious about this matter, saw the following vision: It seemed to him that he had gathered from the ground tiny crumbs of bread, which he had to distribute to many famished brethren standing round him. And as he dreaded to distribute such minute crumbs, fearing lest such fine dust should fall out of his hands, there came a voice from on high, which cried: "Francis, make one host out of all the crumbs, and give it to eat to all who will". And when he did so, those who received not the gift devoutly, or despised it when they had received it, presently appeared branded with the taint of leprosy. In the morning he related all these things to his companions, grieving that he could not understand the mystery of the vision. But soon afterwards, as he was watching in prayer, this voice came to him from heaven: "Francis, the crumbs of the past night are the words of the Gospel, the host is the Rule, the leprosy is wickedness".

The brethren of those times who were in everything eager to perform more than was enjoined deemed not this faith which they had sworn to obey to be hard or harsh. For listlessness and idleness find no place where the goad of love is ever urging on to greater achievements.

Of His Infirmities

Chapter 160

How he took counsel with a certain brother about caring for his body

210. Amid countless labours and grievous sicknesses, Francis, God's herald, trod in the footprints of Christ, nor did he draw back his foot until he had even more perfectly accomplished that which he had perfectly begun. For though he was enfeebled and wholly shattered in body, he never halted in his pursuit of perfection, never suffered himself to relax the rigour of discipline; and even now that his body was worn out he could not give it even a little relief without some murmuring of conscience. Therefore when it became necessary even against his will to ease his bodily distresses (which were beyond his strength to bear) with some soothing remedies, he called one of the brethren, who he knew would give him expedient counsel, and said kindly to him: "What thinkest thou, dearest son, of the frequent murmuring of my conscience touching the care of my body? It fears lest I be over-indulgent to the body in its sickness and lest I be eager to relieve it with delicacies carefully sought out. Not that it can take anything with pleasure now that it is worn by long infirmity and that all incitement of taste has gone." (211) The son (recognising that the words of his answer were being given him by the Lord) made heedful reply to the father saying: "Tell me, father, if thou deignest to do so, with what diligence thy body, while it could, obeyed thy behests?" "I bear it witness, my son," answered Saint Francis, "that it has been obedient in all things and has spared itself in nothing but has (as it were) rushed headlong to obey all commands. It has shirked no toil, has refused no discomfort, if only it might do as it was bid. Herein have I and it been in perfect agreement, that we should serve Christ the Lord without any reluctance." And the brother said: "Where, then, father, is thy liberality? where thy compassion and thine eminent discretion? Is it a worthy rewarding of faithful friends to accept a kindness gladly, and then in the time of his need not to requite the giver's merit? How could'st thou have served Christ thy Lord all this time without the help of the body? Has it not, as thou thyself allowest, exposed itself to every danger, for the sake of this very thing?" "I confess, my

son," said the father, "that this is most true." Then said the son: "Is it reasonable that thou shouldest be wanting in such great need to so faithful a friend who has for thy sake exposed himself and what is his even unto death? Be it far from thee, father, stay and staff of the afflicted: be this sin against the Lord far from thee." "Blessed be thou, also, my son," he answered, "who hast wisely ministered such salutary remedies to my scruples." And he began joyfully to address his body thus: "Rejoice, brother body, and forgive me, for behold now I gladly fulfil thy desires, and gladly hasten to attend to thy complaints." But what could delight his frail and exhausted body now? What could sustain that which had given way on every side? Francis was now dead to the world, but Christ was living in him. The world's delights were a cross to him, because he bore Christ's cross rooted in his heart. And therefore did the stigmata shine outwardly in his flesh because within that deeply planted root was sprouting in his mind.

Chapter 161

That which the Lord promised to him instead of his infirmities

212. It was wonderful that his strength held out to bear the sufferings in every part which had so exhausted him. But these, his distresses, he described by the name not of pains but of "sisters". There is no doubt that they proceeded from many causes. Verily, to the end that triumphs might increase his renown, means whereby he might triumph were now being afforded to the tried veteran to whom even when a recruit the Most High had committed difficult tasks. Herein also his followers may take example by him, for age did not make him any more sluggish nor infirmity any more self-indulgent in all he did. Nor was it for nothing that his purgation was completed in the vale of tears; for thus he might give account even to "the uttermost farthing" in case anything that might be burned (see 1 Corinthians 3:12-15) yet remained in him, and so at last, having been perfectly cleansed, he might take his flight to heaven without delay. But the strongest reason for his torments I take to be that (as he himself used to say concerning others) in the bearing of them "there is great reward".

213. For one night when he was more wearied than usual by the different grievous pains caused by his infirmities, he began in the

depth of his heart to feel some pity for himself. But (lest that ready spirit should in anything yield carnal consent to the flesh even for an hour) by praying to Christ he preserved the shield of patience unmoved.

And at length as he prayed amid the conflict, there was vouchsafed to him from the Lord the promise of eternal life under this similitude: "If the whole bulk of the earth and machine of the world were gold beyond price, and if in exchange for the heavy sufferings thou art enduring all thy pain were removed, and there were given thee for a reward a treasure of glory in comparison whereof the aforesaid gold should be nothing, and unworthy even to be named, wouldst not thou rejoice and gladly bear what thou art bearing now?" "I should rejoice indeed," said the Saint; "yea, and above measure I should rejoice." "Exult, then," said the Lord to him, "for thy sickness is the earnest of My kingdom, and do thou, secure and confident through the merit of patience, await the inheritance of that kingdom." But with what exultation, thinkest thou, did the man rejoice who was blessed by so happy a promise? With what patience, nay more with what love, believest thou that he welcomed bodily sufferings? He now knows perfectly; but then it was impossible for him to utter it. However, he did tell some little of it, as he could, to his companions. Then it was that he composed certain "Praises concerning the Creatures," inciting them in some sort to praise the Creator.

Of the Passing of the Holy Father

Chapter 162

How at the end he encouraged the brethren and blessed them

214. "In man's end," saith the Wise Man, (Ecclesiasticus 11:27) "his works are laid bare;" which we see to have been gloriously fulfilled in this Saint. For after running the way of God's commandments with alacrity of mind, and passing by successive steps through all the virtues, he attained the highest point, and having been brought to perfection, like a plastic work, beneath the hammer of manifold tribulation, beheld every end fully attained. For then did his wondrous works shine the brightest, then did it blaze forth by the token of truth that his whole life had been divine, when having trampled on the allurements of the mortal life he took his free flight on high. For he deemed it a disgrace to live for the world; "he loved his own unto the end"; and he welcomed death with singing. For as he was drawing nigh to his last days, wherein the light perpetual was succeeding to the temporal light that had been withdrawn, he showed by an effectual example that he had nothing in common with the world. For, worn out as he was by that grievous sickness which was the end of all his sufferings, he bade that he should be laid naked on the bare ground, that in that last hour wherein the enemy could yet rage against him, he might wrestle naked with his naked foe. Truly the brave warrior was awaiting his triumph and with clasped hands was seizing the crown of righteousness. Laid thus on the ground, his garment of sackcloth having been removed, he raised his face (as he was wont) to heaven, and, wholly intent on that [celestial] glory, he covered with his left hand the wound in his right side, that it might not be seen. And he said to the brethren, "I have done my duty, may Christ teach you yours". (215) At the sight of these things the brethren poured forth streams of tears, and heaved heavy sighs from their inmost heart, overcome by their exceeding grief and compassion. Meantime, when their sobs were somewhat abated, his warden, with truer knowledge, through Divine inspiration, of the Saint's wish, hastily rose, took the tunic, the drawers, and the little cap of sackcloth, and said to the father: "Know that this tunic, these drawers, and this cap have been lent

thee by me by order of holy obedience; but that thou mayest know that thou hast no property in them I deprive thee of all power of giving them to any one". Saint Francis rejoiced and exulted for gladness of heart, for he saw that he had kept faith with the Lady Poverty even to the end.

For he had done all this from zeal for Poverty; so that he would not even that his habit should be his own at the end, but as it were lent by another. (Now he wore the cap of sackcloth on his head to cover the scars which had been produced by the treatment he had undergone for the malady of his eyes; whereas he rather needed a smooth cap of the choicest and softest wool).

216. After this, the Saint raised his hands to heaven and magnified his Christ, for that now, having been discharged from all things, he was going to Him a free man. And in truth, that he might show himself a true imitator in all things of Christ his God, he loved unto the end the brethren and sons whom he had loved from the beginning. For he caused all the brethren present in that place to be called to him, soothed them with comforting words concerning his death, and with fatherly affection exhorted them to the love of God. He spoke at large concerning patience and the maintaining of poverty, putting the Holy Gospel before all other ordinances. Then, as all the brethren sat around, he stretched forth his right hand over them and laid it upon the head of each one, beginning with his Vicar, and, in the persons of those that were there, he blessed also all the brethren living everywhere in the world, and those that should come after them even until the end of the world. Let no one claim for himself this blessing which the Saint pronounced on those who were present on behalf of those who were absent. The blessing, as set forth elsewhere, had a certain special significance, but chiefly in regard to deprivation of office. (Brother Elias, here referred to as the Saint's Vicar, had been deposed from the office of Minister-General in 1239, and had been excommunicated by Gregory IX and by his successor Innocent IV. The author therefore in referring to the passage above, L, 108 (which see) here declares in effect that the special blessing on Elias was not indefeasible, but had been forfeited by him; and that the only part of the Saint's words as there recorded applicable to him now is the vague prediction of tribulation and scandal to come.)

Chapter 163

Of his death, and what he did before his death

217. So while the brethren were weeping bitterly and inconsolably lamenting, the holy father ordered bread to be brought to him: and he blessed it and brake it and handed to each one a morsel to eat. He was calling to mind that most sacred Supper which the Lord last celebrated with his disciples: and it was in reverent memory of Him that he did all this, to show forth the love he bore to the brethren. The few days that remained before he passed away he spent in praise; teaching his dearly loved brethren to praise Christ with him. Moreover, he invited all creatures to praise God; and in certain words which he had composed before exhorted them to the love of God. For he even exhorted Death herself, terrible and hateful to all, to give praise; and joyfully going to meet her, he invited her to lodge with him, saying: "Welcome, my sister Death". And to the physician he said: "Brother physician, boldly foretell that death is at hand, for it will be the gate of life to me". To the brethren: "When ye shall see my end approaching, lay me naked on the ground, even as ye saw me three days ago, and let me lie there when dead for so long a time as one might take to walk a mile gently". So the hour came, and all the mysteries of Christ having been fulfilled in him, he took his happy flight to God.

Chapter 164

Of a vision that brother Augustin saw on his deathbed

218. At that time the Minister of the brethren in Terra di Lavoro was brother Augustin, and he, being at his last hour, and having for a long time lost his speech, suddenly cried out in the hearing of the bystanders and said: "Wait for me, father, wait! See, I am now coming with thee!" And when the brethren, greatly wondering, asked to whom he was speaking, he confidently answered, "See you not our father Francis, who is going to heaven?" And forthwith his holy soul, released from the flesh, followed the most holy father.

Chapter 165

How the holy father, after he had passed away, appeared to one of the

brethren

219. In that night and at that hour, the glorious father appeared to another of the brethren (a man of praiseworthy life who was then absorbed in prayer) clothed in a purple dalmatic, and followed by a countless multitude of men, from which multitude several detached themselves, and said to that brother, "Is not this Christ, brother?" And he replied, "It is He". Others again asked him, "Is not this Saint Francis?" And the brother gave the like answer "that it was he". Truly it seemed to the brother and to all the multitude that the person of Christ and of Saint Francis was one, a judgment which seems by no means temerarious to those of sound understanding, since he who cleaves to God becomes one spirit with Him, and God Himself shall be all in all. At length the blessed father with that wondrous crowd came to a delightsome place, watered with the most limpid streams, verdant with the fairest plants, radiant with the beauty of flowers and filled with every pleasant kind of trees. A palace was there, of wondrous size and singular beauty, which the new denizen of heaven entered eagerly; he found there very many brethren and began to feast with delight in their company at a table most splendidly set out, and covered with various dainties.

Chapter 166

The bishop of Assisi's vision concerning the passing of the holy father

220. When the bishop of Assisi, who had gone on a pilgrimage at that time to the Church of Saint Michael, was lodging at Benevento on his way back, the blessed father Francis on the night of his death appeared to him in a vision, and said to him: "See, father I am leaving the world and going to Christ". When he arose in the morning the bishop told his companions what he had seen, sent for a notary, and set down the day and hour of the passing [of the Saint]. Then, filled with sorrow, and bedewed with tears, he bewailed the loss of his chiefest father. And so, on his return to his own city, he related all things in order and yielded boundless thanks to God for His gifts.

Chapter 167

A prayer of the Saint's companions to him

221. Behold, O our blessed father, we have in our simplicity zealously striven in some sort to praise thy splendid deeds, and, for thy glory's sake, to publish some few of the countless acts of power wrought by thy holiness. We know that our words, unequal as they are to record the mighty acts of such perfection, have deprived thy exploits of much of their splendour. We beseech thee and our readers to balance our affection against our attempt and to rejoice that human pens are surpassed by the loftiness of thy wondrous character. For who, O thou pre-eminent among the Saints, might frame within himself or impress on others an idea of the ardour of thy spirit? Who should be able to conceive of those unspeakable emotions which flowed without intermission from thee to God? But we have written these things delighting in the sweet memory of thee, which so long as we live we endeavour to set forth to others even though with stammering lips. Thou, erstwhile famished, now feedest on the fatness of corn; thou, formerly athirst, now drinkest of the torrent of pleasure. But we believe that thou art not so inebriated by the abundance of the House of God as to have forgotten thy children, since even He, of whom thou drinkest, is mindful of us. Draw us therefore to thee, O worthy father, that we may "run after the odour of thine ointments" (see Canticles 1:3) - we whom thou seest lukewarm in sloth, languid in idleness, half-alive in negligence. The "little flock" is following thee now with faltering steps; the dazzled sight of their weak eyes cannot bear the beams of thy perfection. Renew our days at the beginning, O mirror and pattern of the perfect, and suffer not those who resemble thee by their profession to be unlike thee in their life.

222. Lo now we lay our humble prayers before the clemency of the Eternal Majesty on behalf of Christ's servant our Minister, thy successor in holy humility, thy emulator in true poverty, who for thy Christ's sake is taking zealous care of thy sheep with tender affection. And do thou, O holy one, so advance and encompass him that he may ever cleave to thy footsteps and obtain for ever the praise and glory which thou hast gotten.

223. We beseech thee also, O kindest father, with all our heart's affection, for this thy son who now and before has devoutly written thy praises. He, together with us, offers and dedicates to thee this little work which he has put together not indeed in a manner

worthy of thy merits, but with dutiful affection in the measure of his strength. Deign to keep and to deliver him from all evil, increase in him holy merits, and, by thy prayers join him for ever to the fellowship of the Saints.

224. Remember, father, the whole congregation of thy sons, who, harassed by inexpressible perils are following thy footsteps - at how great a distance thou O most holy one knowest perfectly. Give them strength to resist. Purify them, that they may shine. Cheer them, that they may enjoy. Obtain that "the spirit of grace and supplications" may be poured upon them; that they may have the true humility thou hadst, that they may keep the poverty thou heldest, that they may win the charity wherewith thou didst ever love Christ crucified; Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

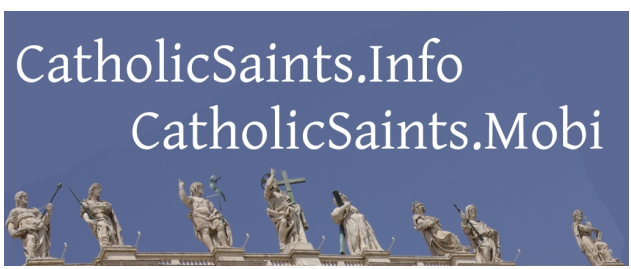
About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *The Lives of Saint Francis of Assisi*, by Brother Thomas of Celano, translated by A. G. Ferrers Howell, LL.M., Trinity College, Cambridge. The edition used was published by E P Dutton and Company of New York, New York in 1908.

The cover image is the painting *Bendición de San Francisco* by José Benlliure y Gil. The image was swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

For more free ebooks, other material by or about Saint Francis, thousands of other saints, beati, venerables, servants of God, devotions, or the history of the Church, come see us at -

CatholicSaints.Info

** or **

CatholicSaints.Mobi